FUGITIVE OF THE FOREST.

A ROMANCE.

LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE

FUGITIVE

OF THE

FOREST.

A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES

BY

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VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.
1801.

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FUGITIVE
OF THE
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CHAP. I.

A ſea of melting pearl, which ſome call tears,
She tendered;
With them, upon her knees, her humble ſelf,
Wringing her hands, whoſe whiteneſs ſo became them,
As if but now they waxed pale for woe.

SHAKSPEAR.

TOWARDS the cloſe of a beautiful evening, in the autumn of 1343, as Count Iſenburgh, with his friend Sigiſmund Mansfeldt, were returning from a ride through an extenſive foreſt near

Colditz, their attention was ſuddenly arreſted by the appearance of a very young and beautiful female figure, in viſible agitation, and at a ſhort diſtance.

At the ſame inſtant, uttering an exclamation of ſurpriſe, they inſtinctively hurried towards the ſpot; but, before they could addreſs the object that attracted them, ſhe, in the moſt emphatic manner, intreated their protection.

"I am (added ſhe) the moſt forlorn, and unfortunate creature in exiſtence! bereft of my only friend, and even ignorant where I now am, and whither my ſteps carry me. I have travelled in this frightful wood ſince

eight o'clock in the morning; and, though happily eſcaping danger, have been tortured by every terrific fear that can ſhock the imagination! my ſtrength now fails; if you refuſe me ſuccour and protection, I muſt inevitably die."

"You may command our ſervices, (eagerly interrupted Sigiſmund,) ſpeak but your wiſhes: you appear ſinking with fatigue; allow me to place you on my horſe, and I will conduct you to the place of your deſtination, however diſtant!"

"My caſtle is ſcarce a league from hence. (cried Iſenburgh,) let us, for the preſent, at any rate, haſten thither."

"Oh! let me conjure you to con-

duct me to Leipfic!" (replied the ſtranger.) "Impoſſible! (returned Iſenburgh) Leipfic is above ſix leagues from this place. It would be madneſs to attempt to reach it to night! Be aſſured you are with thoſe upon whoſe honour you may rely, and who will protect you from all danger. Be adviſed then, and accept the ſhelter of my caſtle."

Further entreaty was unneceſſary; the young ſtranger had fallen, to appearance lifeleſs, upon the arm of Sigiſmund, juſt as Iſenburgh ceaſed ſpeaking.

Mutually alarmed, they conſulted for a few minutes in what manner they ſhould act. Iſenburgh ſtrongly

urged haſtening immediately to his caſtle; but Sigiſmund trembled, leſt carrying her a league, in a ſtate of inſenſibility, might produce fatal conſequences; when Iſenburgh fortunately perceived a ſtream at a very ſhort diſtance, to which he inſtantly hurried, and bringing ſome water in his cap, plentifully ſprinkled the face of the ſtranger, who, in a ſhort time, gave ſigns of returning life, which was joyfully perceived by Iſenburgh and Siguſmund; and, placing her upon the horſe of the latter, they haſtily took the road to the caſtle.

Upon their arrival, Iſenburgh ſummoned the principal of his female domeſtics, and, to their charge giving the yet half-fainting ſtranger, repaired, with

Sigiſmund to the library, where ſhe became the ſole ſubject of their diſcourſe and wonder.

CHAP. II.

———The friendſhips of the world are oft
Confederacies in vice, or leagues of pleaſure.

ADDISON.

COUNT Iſenburgh was juſt nineteen years old, of diſtinguiſhed birth, and large fortune, perfectly handſome, and genteel; and uncontrouled maſter of his actions.

Left an orphan in early infancy, and placed under the guardianſhip of a gen-

tleman of extreme good nature, but moderate abilities, who, while he loved him as an engaging child, reverenced him as his ſuperior. Young Iſenburgh grew daily more arrogant, preſuming, and ſelf-willed; and the good diſpoſitions with which nature had endowed him, were blaſted by exceſſive and perpetual indulgence.

Yet, to a ſuperficial obſerver, Iſenburgh ſtill was amiable and attractive; perfectly well educated as to exterior manners, and naturally good-tempered: he was often agreeable ſociety; nor had fortune's favors and flattery ſpoiled him beyond retrieval.

But his temper was violent; and the ſmalleſt ſhadow of contradiction ex-

aſperated him to the utmoſt extreme of paſſion.

His acquaintance with Sigiſmund commenced at Leipſic, where they had each received their education; and, though of very oppoſite diſpoſitions, a degree of intimacy had ſucceeded.

Mild, amiable and ſincere, Sigiſmund attracted univerſal regard; his reaſon was beyond his age, and he poſſeſſed very ſuperior talents.

Baron Mansfeldt, his father, though fond of his ſon, of whom the moſt careleſs parent might have been proud, not unfrequently treated him with auſterity, and generally with coldneſs.

The Baroneſs, (who was one of the moſt amiable of women,) though repining at this conduct, could not reverſe it: and, though idolizing Sigiſmund with the extreme warmth of maternal affection, was unable to procure him the indulgencies her ardent tenderneſs deſired.

The Baron was penurious, though wealthy; and to the friendſhip of Iſenburgh, Sigiſmund was often indebted, for being extricated from many embarraſſments into which he was involved through the parſimonious ſpirit of his father.

Attached both by nature and gratitude to his mother, who had ever performed, in the fulleſt extent, the

important duties of that character; Sigiſmund was chiefly at the caſtle where ſhe reſided, and it was merely to oblige Iſenburgh that he had conſented to paſs the ſhooting ſeaſon with him at his eſtate near Colditz, where they had only arrived three days when the adventure occurred mentioned in the laſt chapter.

CHAP. III.

The bloom of op'ning flowers, unſullied beauty,
Softneſs, and ſweeteſt innocence ſhe wears,
And looks like nature in the world's firſt ſpring.

ROWE.

THE following morning Iſenburgh had the pleaſure to hear from his ſervants, that the ſtranger ſeemed infinitely more compoſed; and had ſent a requeſt, to ſee both himſelf and Sigiſmund, for a few minutes.

Both gentlemen eagerly obeyed the ſummons, and haſtened to the apartment in which was the lady, whom, if they had thought beautiful the preceding evening, when overpowered with terror and fatigue, they now thought angelic!

She appeared ſcarce fifteen, ſlender, and elegantly formed; and the harmony of her features, and inimitably turned countenance, were rendered yet more faſcinating by the uncommon brilliancy of her complexion.

Her dark brown hair, which was redundantly luxuriant, was bràided round her head in the Grecian manner: her dreſs was a looſe drapery of white muſlin; and from a gold chain that

hung round her neck, was ſuſpended a large enamelled heart, richly ſet round with diamonds.

Upon the entrance of Iſenburgh and Sigiſmund, ſhe roſe haſtily from her ſeat, and advancing towards them, energetically exclaimed:

"My generous preſervers! in what words can I expreſs my gratitude and thanks! from what imminent perils have you ſaved me!—oh, gracious heaven! I yet ſhudder at the dangers I have eſcaped! language is too weak, and my heart too full, to allow me ſpeech to expreſs my feelings; but, may that ſame Power which, in pity to my diſtreſs, ſent you to my aid, ſhower eternal bleſſings upon you!"

"You value the trifling ſervice we were ſo happy as to ſhew you too highly, (replied Iſenburgh.) To have relieved your diſtreſs, I ſhall ever conſider as the moſt valued moment of my exiſtence! May I flatter myſelf, that, in future, you will condeſcend to look upon me as your moſt zealous friend; and, happily one, who has the ability, as well as the will, to ſerve you."

"Alas, (anſwered the lady, burſting into tears,) it is impoſſible for any mortal to befriend me! my ſorrows cannot be alleviated!"

"Might we but aſk to be made acquainted with thoſe afflictions, (cried Sigiſmund,) we might be able, at any rate, to ſoften them."

" I ought not to have any reſerves with ſuch generous friends as I have found you, gentlemen; (returned the lady,) nor is it neceſſary. My name is Eſtella, but who, and what my parents are, I am totally ignorant. As long as I can recollect, I have lived in a ſmall cottage, ſituated in a very retired part of the foreſt in which you found me, and concealed from common obſervation by thick and lofty trees.

" Madame Veldentz, the only perſon who lived with me, called herſelf my governeſs; and, to my frequent enquiries of who I was, and if I might ever hope to ſee my parents? always replied, that ſhe was bound by the moſt ſolemn oaths, never to divulge the ſecret; but that the day would,

perhaps, arrive, when I ſhould know my family hiſtory; and that, in the mean time, I muſt attend unceaſingly to the inſtructions ſhe beſtowed, as if the time ſhould ever come that I ſhould be introduced into the world, it would be neceſſary that I ſhould be accompliſhed and well-informed; and if I remained in ſolitude, my acquirements would be a never-failing reſource againſt wearineſs.

"To the extent of my abilities, I profited by her inſtructions; and the cuſtom of learning grew habitually ſo pleaſing to me, that though we generally roſe at ſix o'clock, muſic, drawing, reading and needle-work, (occaſionally diverſifying the time with walks near to our little dwelling,) ſo

engroſſed me, that the day generally ſeemed too ſhort for our avocations.

" Madame Veldentz, who was an excellent manager, contrived, by keeping poultry, and cultivating our little garden, to have ſo few wants, that there was ſeldom occaſion for her viſiting Colditz; but ſometimes that ſtep was neceſſary, and her cuſtom was then to go with the firſt dawn of morning, and leave me in our cottage, which ſhe carefully locked and padlocked. Often did I fruitleſsly urge her to permit me to accompany her. She was always deaf to my intreaties till about two months ago, when I attained my fifteenth year; then, overpowered by my repeated ſolicitations,

ſhe conſented that I ſhould attend her the following morning. What was my delight at obtaining this permiſſion! I had never ſeen any habitation but our own, nor any human being but Madame Veldentz, (a few working people excepted, who I but rarely had ſeen in the foreſt;) but I had read wonderful accounts of towns, cities, and mankind in general; and my heart fluttered with expectation and delight at the wonders I ſhould behold!

"Madame Veldentz, even when the morning arrived, ſeemed reluctant that I ſhould accompany her; but my intreaties were too powerful for her good-nature to withſtand; and enveloping me in a thick veil, we left our cottage, and took the road to Colditz.

" We had ſcarce proceeded half a league, when a man, wrapped up in a large great coat, ſuddenly overtook us; and, making a full ſtop, earneſtly ſurveyed us. The countenance of Madame Veldentz ſuddenly became overclouded, but whiſpering to me to keep my veil careſully over my face, we continued to walk on a few hundred yards, when my governeſs, proteſting ſhe was ſeized with a violent cramp, inſiſted upon returning; and, though mortified at my diſappointment, I could no longer oppoſe her reſolution.

" Upon our arrival at our cottage, Madame Veldentz ſeemed gloomy and unhappy; and when I expreſſed my chagrin at the failure of my wiſhes in the morning, pettiſhly chid me;

and, upon my adding, that I hoped the next time ſhe viſited Colditz, I ſhould be more fortunate, ſhe harſhly declared, no perſuaſions ſhould again induce her to allow me to bear her company.

" Though vexed at this declaration, I did not dare repine; but flattered myſelf time might relax what I thought the ſeverity of my governeſs.

" A few mornings after this adventure, whilſt walking in our little garden alone, I perceived, at a very ſhort diſtance, the ſame man who had met us in the foreſt.

" Alarmed at his appearance, though from what cauſe, I could not aſſign,

I hurried in doors, and haſtening to Madame Veldentz, informed her of his appearance.

" Madame Veldentz turned pale at my information, and ſeemed for ſome minutes deliberating how to act; then turning to me, ſhe ſaid ſternly;

" Eſtella, it is neceſſary I ſhould ſpeak with this perſon who has thus alarmed you; but obſerve, remain in this chamber till my return.

" So ſaying, ſhe haſtily quitted me; and I heard her, after cloſing the door, carefully lock it.

" Surpriſed at a conduct for which I could by no means account, I ran

eagerly to the window, hoping from thence to be able to obſerve her conduct to the ſtranger.

" I was not diſappointed; I ſaw Madame Veldentz walk briſkly to the ſpot where ſtood the unknown, who, upon ſeeing her, haſtened inſtantly towards her: he ſeized her hand; ſhe did not remove it, and their converſation ſeemed equally intereſting.

" At length they ſat down upon the body of a tree that lay upon the ground adjacent; and, for above three hours, ſeemed abſorbed in an intereſting converſation.

" At laſt they aroſe, and, ſeeming to bid each other farewell, the unknown

immerged deeper into the wood, and Madame Veldentz returned to our cottage.

" During that whole day, ſhe ſeemed full of reflection, and to my repeated interrogations, reſpecting the ſtrange gentleman, replied, that the time would come when I ſhould know every thing, but that for the preſent I muſt forbear curioſity.

" Juſt as I had taken leave of her for the night, and was preparing to go to bed, ſhe ſuddenly informed me, ſhe muſt viſit Colditz on the next day, but forbade me, on pain of her diſpleaſure, to aſk to accompany her.

" I obeyed, though reluctantly, and went to bed; but ſleep was a ſtranger

to my eye lids; the myſterious conduct of my governeſs, the unaccountable appearance of the ſtranger, altogether bewildered my ideas, and I paſſed the whole night in a ſea of wonder and doubt, and aroſe in the morning, with even increaſed alarm and apprehenſion.

"In ſpite of my endeavours to conquer the notion, I could not perſuade myſelf but that Madame Veldentz was going to quit me for ever; and the idea was ſo fixed upon me, that I actually acquainted her with my ſuſpicions, and clinging to her, as ſhe roſe to depart, beſought her for pity's ſake not to abandon me!

" Madame Veldentz ſeemed really ſhocked at my concern; yet, half chiding, half ſoothing, in ſome part relieved my fears, and endeavoured to convince me of their fallacy.

" But when at the expiration of half an hour ſhe aroſe, to depart, my terrors returned with additional violence, nor could I be pacified, till ſhe faithfully promiſed to relinquiſh the idea of viſiting Colditz that day.

" Satisfied at having obtained this promiſe, I commenced my cuſtomary employments, and when night came, tenderly carreſſed Madame Veldentz, thanked her for having humoured my weakneſs, and promiſed, never again to act ſo unreaſonably.

" Indeed, in that very ſhort ſpace of time, my fears had lulled to reſt, and I bluſhed at having for a moment indulged them.

" My governeſs ſeemed much affected by my behaviour; her tears flowed, and her agitation was exceſſive.

" At laſt, after bidding me a tender adieu, and making me ſwallow a cordial, which ſhe ſaid would be ſerviceable, ſhe retired.

" The following morning I ſlept longer than uſual, in conſequence, I imagined, of the medicine I had taken the preceding night.

"I roſe and haſtened to the room where we uſually breakfaſted, in full expectation of ſeeing Madame Veldentz, but the room ſeemed deſolate and forſaken; I again returned up ſtairs, and called upon the name of my governeſs repeatedly, but was ſtill unſucceſsful. Half frightened, I haſtened to the garden door, thinking it might be probable ſhe was walking in the garden; alas, my fears then increaſed to an alarming degree; I perceived the key removed, and that the door was faſt locked from the outſide!

"Convinced that Madame Veldentz had put her ſcheme in execution of going to Colditz, all my ſucceeding fears ruſhed into my imagination, I

returned to the parlour quite diſconſolate, till by chance a letter directed for me, in the hand of my governeſs, caught my attention; I ſeized it eagerly, and this was the diſtreſſing epiſtle."

So ſaying, Eſtella put a ſmall note into Sigiſmund's hand, who read as follows:

"*TO ESTELLA.*

"Peculiar circumſtances conſtrain me to act in a manner inſupportably diſtreſſing to my feelings! my dear Eſtella, I muſt leave you! you but too prophetically divined my deſire for viſiting Colditz this day! yes, my child, we muſt for the preſent ſeparate; but I do not leave you friendleſs.

" I have arranged a ſcheme for your future life, which I hope will be productive of eaſe and comfort.

" The Abbeſs of the Convent of St. Clare, is my relation; I have written to her this day concerning you; ſhe will fetch you from hence tomorrow morning; may ſhe arrive in time to deliver you this letter and teach you reſignation to its contents!

" It is not now in my power to unravel the myſtery of your birth, or diſcloſe the reaſons of my ſudden deſertion!

" Never omit to wear your heart and chain; reſpect, and love the Abbeſs of St. Clare, and endeavour to conciliate her affection; ſhe is already diſpoſed to

love you, and the unalterable ſweetneſs of diſpoſition you poſſeſs, will ſoon ripen that inclination into a real friendſhip!

"And now farewell, deareſt Eſtella! I muſt not attempt to deſcribe my feelings at this cruel neceſſity of leaving you; you know my tenderneſs and affection, and muſt believe the ſtep deeply lacerates my boſom; and that the effort proceeds from *duty*, untainted by caprice! I dare not truſt myſelf with another interview.

"May Heaven preſerve you!

"AGATHA VELDENTZ."

"Judge what were my ſenſations after peruſing that cruel billet! (cried Eſtella, as Sigiſmund ceaſed reading)

my tears and lamentations, though conſcious they were unavailing, were unceaſing! till at length the idea ſtruck me, that by haſtening to Leipſic, I might yet be able to overtake Madame Veldentz, and by intreaty prevail upon her not to abandon me. The thought of being placed at the Convent of St. Clare was inſupportable; and I determined at all hazards to eſcape from our little dwelling, that the Abbeſs, who I ſuppoſed would very ſhortly arrive, might find her journey fruitleſs.

"The apprehenſion that I ſhould ſcarce have ſufficient time to effect my ſcheme, accelerated my motions, and by the help of table cloths fixed to the window, I eſcaped; and immerging

into the foreſt, eagerly ſought the road to Leipſic; but alas, ignorant of the different paths, I ſeemed every minute further from the ſpot I ſought; and tired and fatigued with being ſo many hours walking, without taking the leaſt ſuſtenance, I ſhould certainly have died with fatigue, had not your generous kindneſs, gentlemen, relieved me!"

When Eſtella ceaſed ſpeaking, both Iſenburgh and Sigiſmund made her many acknowledgments for the confidence ſhe had ſhewn them, and repeated their offers of ſervice.

Eſtella thanked them with the greateſt ſweetneſs, but ſaid ſhe had already been ſufficiently troubleſome;

that her only wiſh was to find Madame Veldentz, and that by going to Leipſic ſhe did not doubt but that ſhe ſhould obtain her deſire, as ſhe could not but imagine her governeſs would remain there, till ſhe ſhould hear whether the Abbeſs of St. Clare had conveyed her to the Convent.

"Surely (cried Sigiſmund) you cannot ſeriouſly wiſh to embark again in thoſe troubles from which you ſo ſeverely ſuffered yeſterday! Pardon me, but though the conduct of Madame Veldentz is myſterious, yet it is very diſcernable, that ſhe, from reflection, abandons you; and that, conſequently, ſhe will take every ſtep to avoid you; indeed it is moſt probable ſhe has quitted this part of the country."

"Alas, (cried Eſtella) I muſt not remain here."

"Why not? (interrupted Iſenburgh eagerly), you are with thoſe who, to the laſt moment of exiſtence, will protect you; and in a ſpot where your ſmalleſt wiſhes ſhall be laws. Deign, then, charming Eſtella, to remain in a caſtle where you are ſovereign, and relinquiſh the chimerical notion of ſeeking a woman, who muſt be unworthy of your tenderneſs, ſince ſhe can reſolve to abandon you."

Eſtella ſeemed much averſe to this arrangement: Iſenburgh made uſe of every argument to perſuade her, and Sigiſmund alſo pleaded powerfully; yet their arguments were of no avail;

and, though contrary to the opinion and wiſhes of both the gentlemen, they were obliged to coincide with her intention of going to Leipſic the following day, ſtipulating, however, that they ſhould be permitted to accompany her.

Shortly after this point was ſettled, Eſtella complained of a violent pain in her head, and ſeeming deſirous of being left alone, Iſenburgh and Sigiſmund withdrew.

CHAP. IV.

——————— In one ſhort hour
Already am I gone an age of *paſſion!*

DRYDEN.

UPON quitting the apartment of Eſtella, Iſenburgh and Sigiſmund repaired to the garden, and for ſome time they each ſeemed plunged in thought.

At length Iſenburgh, breaking ſilence, exclaimed:

"I never could have ſuppoſed ſuch a young creature as Eſtella could have been ſo inflexible! with what firmneſs ſhe reſiſted our joint endeavours to perſuade her to remain here!"

"She has, doubtleſs, received a good education from that myſterious Madame Veldentz, (returned Sigiſmund,) ſhe ſeems ſo well acquainted with the rules of propriety."

"She is the moſt angelic creature I ever beheld, (anſwered Iſenburgh;) but Madame Veldentz might have employed herſelf more to the purpoſe

than in filling her little head with prudiſh notions."

"She is truly faſcinating, (replied Sigiſmund,) and I think that fear of deviating from propriety renders her yet more ſo; (for what female can be amiable who is not governed by thoſe dictates!) I muſt confeſs, that the conduct of Eſtella, in determining, at all hazards, to ſeek her governeſs, intereſts me more forcibly than ever in her behalf."

Iſenburgh turned his head on one ſide to conceal a ſatyrical ſmile which eſcaped him at the laſt words of Sigiſmund, and the converſation took a different turn.

Shortly after they had dined, Iſenburgh, with Sigiſmund, propoſed again viſiting Eſtella, when a ſervant entered to ſay, that the young lady was alarmingly indiſpoſed. Shocked at this intelligence, they inſtantly hurried to her chamber, and found her reclining upon a ſofa, with every ſymptom of a high fever.

Iſenburgh inſtantly diſpatched a domeſtic for medical advice, and enforced particular orders to his female ſervants to ſhew every aſſiſtance to the invalid, who was ſoon after put to bed, and Sigiſmund and Iſenburgh remained in an adjacent room, eagerly expecting the apothecary, who, upon arriving, and ſeeing Eſtella, pronounced

her illneſs to proceed from over fatigue, and ordered her to be kept quiet.

During ſome days, Eſtella continued ſeriouſly ill; but a natural good conſtitution, aided by the aſſiduous attention ſhe received, at the expiration of a fortnight, enabled her to quit her apartment; and, with returning health, her beauty ſeemed increaſed even to additional lovelineſs.

No ſooner did health return to Eſtella, than ſhe again expreſſed her hope of finding Madame Veldentz; and, with many expreſſions of gratitude for the favours ſhe had received,

ſignified her intention of quitting the caſtle, and repairing to Leipſic.

Iſenburgh, (who already began to feel for Eſtella, what he denominated a violent paſſion), ſtrongly oppoſed this intention; and, finding all his arguments ineffectual, called upon Sigiſmund to ſecond his intreaties.

Sigiſmund, however, to his ſurprize and vexation, profeſſed his opinion, in many reſpects, to concur with Eſtella's; and propoſed, that, at any rate, ſhe ſhould remain at the convent of St. Clare, while enquiries were made after Madame Veldentz.

In vain did Iſenburgh remind Eſtella of the repugnance ſhe had

expreſſed, when reciting her hiſtory, to the idea of reſiding in St. Clare convent, and that it was to avoid that ſhe fled! Eſtella was immovable; and it was at laſt agreed, that Sigiſmund ſhould carry a letter from her that night to the abbeſs, informing her what had happened ſince the departure of Madame Veldentz, and intreating to be received into the convent.

Sigiſmund, therefore, ſhortly afterwards, rode to the convent of St. Clare, and delivered Eſtella's letter to the lady abbeſs; but what was his ſurprize and vexation, to find her reſolutely bent upon denying admittance to poor Eſtella.

The ſtory of her illneſs ſhe treated as a fable, invented to endeavour to palliate her fault, in remaining ſo long in the manſion of a young and gay man; and enumerating the miſchiefs and injury it would do to the convent, to introduce a young perſon, whoſe character, at beſt, was equivocal, ſhe poſitively refuſed even to ſee the object of her diſpleaſure.

To the enquiries of Sigiſmund after Madame Veldentz, ſhe declared her total ignorance concerning the motives of her flight, and refuſed to ſatisfy his curioſity in any particular whatever.

Finding all attempts to perſuade the abbeſs to admit Eſtella into the

convent ineffectual, Sigiſmund withdrew, and returned to the caſtle of Iſenburgh, much chagrined at the failure of his embaſſy.

Upon enquiring for Iſenburgh, Sigiſmund learned that a party of gentlemen had called, and that he had gone with them riding: not ſorry that he had an opportunity to converſe with Eſtella alone, he haſtily flew to her apartment, and found her moſt eagerly expecting him.

Though it was with the utmoſt caution he acquainted her with the abbeſs's reſolution not to receive her, and omitted the reflexion ſhe had thrown upon her for becoming a gueſt in Iſenburgh's caſtle, Eſtella was

overwhelmed with grief at the information. Sigiſmund had felt a growing affection for Eſtella even from the firſt moment he had beheld her; and the ſight of her diſtreſs increaſed his love with his commiſeration. Unable to repreſs his feelings, he avowed the affection with which ſhe had inſpired him; and the manner in which ſhe heard his declaration, convinced him he was not diſagreeable. Their converſation became intereſting; Eſtella expreſſed a hope that he would adviſe her how to act; at the ſame time ſaying, it was impoſſible for her to remain at Iſenburgh's caſtle.

Sigiſmund heard that declaration with rapture; and, actuated more by love than diſcretion, entreated Eſtella

to accept his hand, and, by that means, give him a natural right to protect her.

Eſtella heard this offer with much confuſion, intermingled with gratitude. At length, recovering from her embarraſsment, ſhe ſaid, "ſhe was confident his family would never conſent to his eſpouſing a poor friendleſs girl, deſtitute in every reſpect as ſhe was; and that honour would not permit her to take advantage of the partiality with which he honoured her, to his own detriment."

Though the mention of his family reminded Sigiſmund of the auſterity of his father, and of the little probability that he would ever conſent to

his union with Eſtella, he yet continued to urge his requeſt, when the ſudden entrance of Iſenburgh broke off their diſcourſe.

Iſenburgh appeared gloomy and diſcontented: Sigiſmund felt chagrined at his ſudden intruſion; and Eſtella ſeemed loſt in reflection. The converſation was therefore ſpiritleſs, and ill ſupported on all ſides; and, as ſoon as ſhe poſſibly could, Eſtella withdrew for the night. After ſhe had quitted the apartment, Sigiſmund related to Iſenburgh the converſation he had with the abbeſs of St. Clare.

Iſenburgh liſtened to the particulars with avidity, and it was evident to Sigiſmund, that the refuſal of the

abbeſs to receive Eſtella into the convent, gave him inward ſatisfaction. From many things that fell from Iſenburgh during their converſation, it was very apparent that he was in love with Eſtella. Sigiſmund had ſuſpected it to be the caſe ſhortly after ſhe had been brought to the caſtle; but Iſenburgh's manner that night rendered the matter not to be doubted.

Anxious to form a plan which might enable him to convey Eſtella from the caſtle with all poſſible diſpatch, Sigiſmund paſſed the whole night, after retiring to his chamber, in traverſing the room, and creating new ſchemes in his imagination. To propoſe to marry her openly, was what he did not dare to do, being wholly dependant upon

his father, (of whom he ſtood in great fear,) and ſcarce twenty years old. At length he reſolved to ſend a note to Eſtella early in the morning, requeſting ſhe would meet him for half an hour in the park, that he might have an opportunity of finiſhing the converſation which Iſenburgh had interrupted the preceding evening.

CHAP. V.

If you think I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverſe, and ſay thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but elſe, not for the world.
In truth, fair Sigiſmund, I am too fond;
And therefore thou mayeſt think my behaviour light,
But truſt me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than thoſe that have more cunning to be ſtrange.

SHAKESPEAR.

UPON receiving Sigiſmund's billet, Eſtella was greatly divided how to act, her inclination ſtrongly prompted her

to meet him in the park, according to his requeſt, but the apprehenſion that by ſo doing ſhe might render herſelf liable to cenſure, ſtaggered her determination.

She already felt a growing attachment to Sigiſmund and an unconquerable diſlike to Iſenburgh, notwithſtanding the marked attention and unbounded complaiſance of the latter.

Yet though ſhe reſolved never to form a clandeſtine union with Sigiſmund, ſhe yet thought that the moſt rigorous judge could not condemn her for endeavouring to ſecure the friendſhip of a young man ſo apparently amiable, in her forlorn ſituation.

The latter reflection gaining ſtrength upon her mind, ſhe determined to meet him, and ſoftly quitting her chamber, ſhe with trembling ſteps entered the park.

It was ſcarcely eight o'clock in the morning. Iſenburgh, who never breakfaſted till a late hour, was not riſen; but Sigiſmund had been in the park for a conſiderable time, and had nearly relinquiſhed the hopes of ſeeing Eſtella, when ſhe appeared walking down the avenue that led from the houſe. He eagerly ſprang towards her, and expreſſed, in the livelieſt manner, his rapture at beholding her, and the obligation ſhe conferred in affording him an opportunity of diſcourſing with her alone; and renewed

the arguments he had made uſe of the preceding evening, to induce her to quit the caſtle of Iſenburgh, and receive his faith at the altar.

Eſtella, though ſhe would not attempt to conceal the preference ſhe entertained for him, yet ſtrongly refuſed her aſſent to his propoſal.

"Our acquaintance has been too ſhort, (added ſhe,) for you to be enabled to judge of my diſpoſition and character ſufficiently to aſcertain if I am calculated to make you happy, even if I was upon an equality with you in birth and fortune; and can you imagine, that ignorant alike of the authors of my being, and their rank in ſociety, I could take advan-

tage of your generoſity and affection, to induce you to form an alliance with one who is, moſt probably, much beneath you?"

"Oh, ſtop, for heaven's ſake, my deareſt Eſtella! (interrupted Sigiſmund,) can you ſuppoſe me ſo ſordid and mean as to regard ſuch trifling conſiderations? Do more juſtice to my affection, and be aſſured that no circumſtances could change that regard which is fixed ſolely upon yourſelf."

"Ah, (cried Eſtella,) though ſuch may be your generous ſentiments, yet remember you have parents and friends, who, doubtleſs, expect you to form a brilliant connection."

" 'Tis true, (answered Sig[illegible]mund,) I have not much hope that my father would at present consent to our union; but, would you but agree to a private marriage, my mother, (who is one of the most amiable women in existence) should be entrusted with the secret, and, through her intercession, my father would, in a short time, I [illegible] not, be induced to forgive what [illegible] not be undone."

" Indeed, Sigismund, (replied Ethella,) I would not, upon any consideration, be accessary to your committing such an act of disobedience. Filial duty, in every state of life, ought to be implicit; do not, therefore, urge me to [illegible] to oblige you

inevitably to break what I conſider as one of the firſt duties: but allow me to beſpeak your friendſhip and aſſiſtance upon another ſubject: I ſhall not be happy till I have quitted this caſtle. Since by my indiſcretion I have forfeited the introduction of Madame Veldentz to the convent of St. Clare, may I ſolicit you to endeavour to procure me a ſituation in any other convent that is adjacent. I have a ſmall ſum of money, (continued ſhe, taking a little ſilver purſe from her pocket,) which I conclude Madame Veldentz placed in my pocket whilſt I was aſleep the night preceding her ſtrict departure; and this I hope will be ſufficient to defray my expences for the preſent."

"I will go this morning to Leipsic, to the convent of St. Agnes, (cried Sigismund eagerly;) a relation of mine was educated there; and, as the abbess is personally acquainted with me, I think it is most probable that I shall there be able to procure for you the situation you desire: and, when you shall be settled agreeably to your wishes, I will, if you will permit, make your history known to my mother, who, I am assured, will be most happy to afford you protection."

"My generous friend, (cried Estella,) to be known to your mother, and to gain her protection, would, to me, be a happiness that language is too weak to express!"

"And may I hope, (added Sigiſmund,) that you will authorize the ſentiments that I have ventured to declare?"

Eſtella bluſhed, and looked timidly upon Sigiſmund; ſhe ſaid nothing, but her ſilence was expreſſive: and Sigiſmund, whilſt he preſſed her hand to his lips, felt his heart delight with tranſport, aſſured that the object of his love felt a reciprocal affection.

CHAP. VI.

Ma, chi di paventare in alta impresa,
S'avvien, ch'unqua s'arresti, e che non pieghe
Amor, che non catena il cielo annoda.

TASSO.

AFTER quitting Eftella, Sigifmund mounted his horſe, and haſtened to Leipſic. At the convent of St. Agnes, he found the abbeſs perfectly willing to receive Eftella as a boarder. He ventured to deſcribe her as his own

couſin, thinking, that by ſaying ſhe was related to ſuch a reſpectable family as Mansfeldt, he ſhould enſure her being regarded with reſpect.

After ſettling the neceſſary preliminaries reſpecting the admittance of Eſtella to the convent, Sigiſmund took leave of the abbeſs, delighted that he had obtained a ſituation for her, which would remove her from Iſenburgh, whoſe attentions he began to view with the eyes of jealouſy.

Upon arriving at the caſtle, Sigiſmund found Iſenburgh in the apartment of Eſtella, in earneſt converſation, and viſibly much intereſted in the ſubject of his diſcourſe.

Eſtella no ſooner perceived Sigiſmund, than, turning towards him, ſhe exclaimed:

"My beſt friend! have you been ſucceſsful? is there yet an aſylum left me?"

"At the convent of St. Agnes, (anſwered Sigiſmund,) I have procured for you the temporary reſidence you require: the abbeſs is willing to receive you, whenever you are deſirous of putting yourſelf under her protection."

"Then I will go from hence to-morrow, (returned Eſtella;) how much am I indebted to you for procuring

me ſuch a reſpectable ſituation!" "And, no doubt, (interrupted Iſenburgh, who had ſat in ſullen ſilence from the entrance of Sigiſmund,) no doubt you are more indebted to him for enabling you to quit theſe hated walls, and to act without the advice and aſſiſtance of one, who, though moſt anxious to ſerve you, has yet inſpired you with the moſt invincible diſlike!"

"Oh, heavens! Count Iſenburgh, (replied Eſtella,) can you really ſuppoſe me ſo ſuperlatively ungrateful? Do me more juſtice, and, be aſſured I can never forget the favours you have beſtowed upon me; but, it would be totally inconſiſtent with propriety, to remain in your caſtle, for obvious

reaſons; and, when I found in our laſt converſation upon this ſubject, that the generoſity of your diſpoſition rendered you averſe to my ſeeking any other aſylum, was it not natural I ſhould accept the ſervices of your friend, who, happily, entertained the ſame opinions as myſelf?"

Iſenburgh ſighed, and was a few minutes without reply, at length he cried;

"But, Eſtella, promiſe me you will not leave us tomorrow. Surely ſuch a trifling requeſt you may grant without breaking through thoſe faſtidious rules of which you ſeem to ſtand in ſuch awe."

"I cannot comply, (anſwered Eſtella;) I am reſolved to go to the convent early tomorrow morning."

"With Sigiſmund for your guide?" (enquired Iſenburgh ſarcaſtically). "Moſt aſſuredly, (interrupted Sigiſmund haſtily;) after my converſation with the abbeſs this morning, it will be abſolutely proper I ſhould place Eſtella under her protection."

Eſtella was embarraſſed, and, turning to Iſenburgh, ſhe ſeemed preparing to addreſs him, when darting an angry look he cried, "Though I have not the honour of your confidence, though it is not me you ſelect for

the companion of your morning walks, you ſhall, notwithſtanding, find me a friend. In ſpite of yourſelf, I will be ſerviceable to you; and when you ſhall have proved the ſincerity of my diſintereſted eſteem, you will, perhaps, arraign yourſelf of ill-founded prejudice in your unjuſt and cruel averſion!"

With theſe words, Iſenburgh abruptly quitted the room; and, haſtening to his own, gave himſelf up to the contending paſſions of love, rage and jealouſy.

The paſſion he entertained for Eſtella had daily gained increaſing ſtrength; and nothing had prevented him from

avowing it to her, but the preſence of Sigiſmund.

In him, he beheld, not only a rival, but a cenſor, whom he dreaded; conſcious that his own intentions would not bear the ſcrutiny of a man of honour.

He had obſerved a ſoftneſs in the manner of Eſtella towards Sigiſmund; and the tenor of her conduct ſhewed a preference towards him, that filled the boſom of Iſenburgh with reſentment and jealous rage. The pleaſure he uſed to feel in Sigiſmund's company was gone, diſlike ſucceeded, and he eagerly wiſhed the time to arrive when he ſhould return to Mansfeldt. To anticipate that event, he deter-

mined to cauſe an anonymous letter to be written to Baron Mansfeldt, informing him, that his ſon had formed a dangerous connexion with an artful woman of intrigue, who was uſing every endeavour to ſeduce him into a clandeſtine marriage, and would moſt probably ſucceed, did not parental influence interfere, and ſummons him back to Mansfeldt."

When Sigiſmund ſhould be removed, Iſenburgh had no doubt but that his own plans would ſucceed. Marriage with Eſtella had never entered his ideas; though aware of the purity of Sigiſmund's ſentiments, he had cautiouſly concealed his own from his obſervation; and, apprehenſive of engendering ſuſpicions in the breaſt of

his friend, had repreſſed every mark of particular attention in his preſence.

The intended removal of Eſtella to the convent of St. Agnes, angered, and diſappointed him; and he determined to leave no ſtratagem untried to get her again into his power.

CHAP. VII.

——— Well, do not ſwear, altho' I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to night;
It is too raſh, too unadvis'd, too ſudden,
Too like the lightning which does ceaſe to be
Ere one can ſay it lightens.

THE following morning a ſervant delivered a ſealed billet to Eſtella; and at the ſame time informed her, that Count Iſenburgh had quitted the caſtle at ſix o'clock that morning, but

had left orders that his equipage ſhould be ready at what hour ſhe pleaſed, to carry her according to her directions.

She opened the note, and read as follows:

"*TO ESTELLA.*

"I leave you, Eſtella, with the hope of being able to render you a ſignal ſervice: what my deſign is, I will not now unfold; nor ſhall you again ſee me, unleſs I am able to effect that, which, if it promotes your felicity, may, in a mind like yours, induce you, in future, to think favourably on

"ISENBURGH."

Eſtella ſhewed the note ſhe had received to Sigiſmund, immediately upon his entering the apartment. The myſterious ſtile in which it was written, occaſioned them mutual ſurprize, nor could they form an idea of the deſign to which he alluded, unleſs he had formed the romantic notion of diſcovering the ſpot where Madame Veldentz had ſecreted herſelf.

After ſome time ſpent in uſeleſs conjecture, Eſtella expreſſed her wiſh to depart for the convent, and bidding farewell to the caſtle of Iſenburgh, ſat out for Leipſic, accompanied by Sigiſmund, and attended by ſeveral domeſtics belonging to Iſenburgh.

After introducing her to the abbefs as his couſin, and entreating her particular attention, Sigiſmund beſought Eſtella to give him five minutes converſation alone in the parlour, when, throwing himſelf at her feet, he exclaimed:

"In complying with your wiſhes, and placing you at this convent, think, Eſtella, of the happineſs of which I deprive myſelf, accuſtomed for this laſt happy month to the extatic bliſs of your ſociety! how ſhall I exiſt, deprived of ſuch felicity! Notwithſtanding the ſudden departure of Iſenburgh, I mean to remain at his caſtle for ſome time, (moſt probably till his return;) promiſe me, then, deareſt

Eſtella, that you will allow me to ſee you every day. The relationſhip that the abbeſs believes to exiſt between us, will authoriſe that ſtep; and, in time, may I venture to hope, you will give me a real and natural right to protect you?"

Eſtella would not attempt to conceal the pleaſure ſhe ſhould derive from Sigiſmund's viſits; and the trouble they each felt when the hour of parting arrived, was greatly ſoftened by the reflection, that they ſhould meet again on the following day.

During ten days, Sigiſmund regularly viſited Eſtella at the convent; and, after each viſit, found his love

and admiration increaſe; not a day paſſed but he diſcovered in her ſome new trait of ſweetneſs of temper, good underſtanding, and a well-cultivated mind: hourly ſhe became more dear to him, and hourly did his own influence become more powerful over her mind.

No intelligence arrived from Iſenburgh; and his abſence often gave riſe to much aſtoniſhment, and many conjectures in the minds of Eſtella and Sigiſmund.

Upon returning to a late dinner at the caſtle, after having ſpent the morning with Eſtella, Sigiſmund was ſurpriſed and afflicted to find a letter from

his father, commanding his inſtant return home, without aſſigning any reaſon for the peremptory command.

Sigiſmund felt inconceivable reluctance to obey this mandate, but his father's orders were not to be diſputed; he determined, therefore, to ſet off for Manſfeldt in two days; and in the mean while, to exert all his influence with Eſtella, to engage her to agree to a private marriage previous to his departure.

The following morning he repaired early to the convent of St. Agnes, and informing the abbeſs he had ſomething of importance to communicate to Eſ-

tella from his father, was permitted to ſee her alone in the parlour.

The agitation of his manner immediately betrayed to Eſtella, that ſomething more than uſual had happened; and ſhe gently inquired, if any news had reached him from Count Iſenburgh?

Sigiſmund inſtantly acquainted her with the real cauſe of his diſtreſs; and concluded, with conjuring her, in the ſtrongeſt terms, to receive his faith at the altar. In vain did Eſtella repeat her determination never to accept his hand in a clandeſtine manner; in vain did ſhe aſſure him of her conviction, that engagements formed

without the concurrence and ſanction of friends, were ultimately unhappy. Sigiſmund's arguments ſeemed to derive freſh force from oppoſition; and, [illegible] her hand, he ſolemnly ſwore never to releaſe it till [illegible] he prom[illegible]ed to unite herſelf to him previous to his departure for Mans[illegible]

"Oh, Eſtella, (he added,) if you have no commiſeration for my ſufferings, at any rate have ſome pity for yourſelf. Call to mind your friendleſs, deſerted ſtate: yet recollect, that very ſtate, though it ought to inſure the good will and protection of the world, on the contrary, renders you more open to its malevolence! Circumſtanced as we now are, the little ſervices, that I

may have been ſo fortunate as to ſhew you, are liable to miſrepreſentation, and even to injure your reputation. Eager to ſee you, and to enjoy the rapturous delight of your converſation, I have ſeized every moment that could afford me that happineſs, without reflecting, that the malice of the envious and wicked, might put the worſt conſtructions upon our friendſhip. Let me, then, conjure you, deareſt Eſtella, to receive my vows: I have prevailed upon a prieſt, upon whom I can depend, to perform the ceremony this evening. I ſhall become of age in fourteen months, till that period it will be very eaſy to conceal our marriage; you can remain at this convent in the ſame ſituation as at preſent; and, my

intimacy with Iſenburgh, will naturally account for my being frequently in this neighbourhood; or, I can remove you to a monaſtery in the neighbourhood of Mansfeldt, which ever is moſt agreeable to you. Speak, then, deareſt Eſtella, and pronounce my doom; you know not to what fatal violence a rejection of my offers may drive me!"

Eſtella's tears fell faſt during the whole of Sigiſmund's ſpeech, in part convinced by his reaſoning, and terrified at his vehemence. Her reſolution gave way; and though ſhe yet continued ſilent, Sigiſmund perceived, by her countenance, that his arguments would ſucceed; and, redoubling

his prayers and intreaties, he at length extorted a promife from the fearful Eftella, to join her fate to his that evening.

After having procured this promife, Sigifmund feemed to have attained the fummit of all happinefs. In proportion, however, as he grew animated and chearful, Eftella became grave and dejected; but even that appearance could not damp the fpirits of the delighted Sigifmund.

After fome time fpent in arranging their future plans, it was agreed, that Eftella fhould leave the convent that night, under pretence of vifiting a friend newly arrived at Leipfic: that Sigifmund fhould meet her at the walls

of the convent, and conduct her to the chapel, where the prieſt he had provided ſhould be ready to unite them.

CHAP. VIII.

The prieſt in milk white veſtments clad,
Perform'd the myſtic rite;
Love, lit the hallow'd torch that led
To Hymen's chaſte delight.

MISS HANNAH MORE.

AT the appointed hour, Eſtella having ſignified to the abbeſs, that a particular friend deſired to ſee her that night, quitted the convent; and, full of fear and apprehenſion, haſtened to

the ſpot where Sigiſmund was anxiouſly expecting to meet her.

The delight he manifeſted at their approaching union, infuſed a ſhort-lived pleaſure in her boſom, but it was a tranſitory ſenſation; and as they approached the chapel, her agitation was too powerful to eſcape the obſervation of Sigiſmund.

"Deareſt Eſtella, (he cried,) baniſh thoſe fears which are ſo inconceivably diſtreſſing. Is not the happy man you thus honour with your choice, ſenſible of the diſtinction you are ready to confer upon him? Are you not going to form the felicity of one who loves you to adoration? And ſhall you

not inſure to yourſelf a ſincere and faithful friend to whom your happineſs is dearer than his own exiſtence, and who can ſhelter you from thoſe evils to which your unprotected innocence would expoſe you? Smile then, dear Eſtella, and let me hope, that this union, which renders me the happieſt of mortals, does not increaſe the vexations of which you have to complain!"

"Dear Sigiſmund! (replied Eſtella,) the ſtep I am about to take ſo fully beſpeaks my unbounded affection, that all proteſtation on that ſubject would be ſuperfluous: but, have I not cauſe to be diſpleaſed with my own conduct? Ought I to give way to that love that renders me thus implicit to

your wiſhes? Ought I to conſent to a marriage formed without the ſanction of your parents? Am I not bringing unhappineſs into a hitherto happy family, and rendering an obedient ſon refractory? Alas! I am but too ſenſible of the impropriety of my conduct, and ſurely that conviction heightens my fault! but my love for you, Sigiſmund, renders every other conſideration puerile."

"Baniſh theſe ridiculous fears, my Eſtella! (cried Sigiſmund, eagerly interrupting her.) Pardon me, but they are devoid of all foundation: I ſhall take the earlieſt opportunity to inform my mother of our union; and, through her mediation, I have no doubt of obtaining my father's forgiveneſs, and

even approbation. Be re-aſſured, and think only of the happineſs you are going to confer upon your faithful Sigiſmund!"

Their arrival at the chapel prevented further diſcourſe.

The prieſt, with another perſon, were already in expectation of their appearance; and Sigiſmund, leading his trembling bride to the altar, received thoſe vows which he expected ſhould render him the happieſt of mankind.

As ſoon as the ceremony was performed, Sigiſmund, after liberally rewarding the prieſt and aſſiſtant, required them to take the moſt ſolemn

oaths of ſecreſy, which, after having received, he, with Eſtella, quitted the chapel, and repaired to apartments not far diſtant; then taking Eſtella's hand, he cried,

" My deareſt Eſtella, to induce you to agree to our union, upon which the whole happineſs of my life depended, I made light of my apprehenſions reſpecting my father's diſpleaſure! Pardon the deceit, which I ſhould never have put in practice, but from the uncertainty, that, unleſs you was deceived in that particular, you never would conſent to be mine. I will no longer conceal from you, that I am inconceivably alarmed, leſt he ſhould gain intelligence of this day's tranſaction, previous to my gaining my

one and twentieth year; but it depends on you to remove my fears: give me but a ſolemn promiſe to conceal, even to deny, our marriage; and the precautions I have taken, render it impoſſible for it to be diſcovered, till it ſuits me to diſcloſe it."

Eſtella gently reproached Sigiſmund with having deceived her in ſuch an important circumſtance, but the promiſe of ſecreſy ſhe moſt chearfully gave; and bound herſelf, in the moſt ſacred manner, to conceal their marriage, till he ſhould permit her to reveal it.

"But, indeed, Sigiſmund, (ſhe continued,) you had no cauſe to ſuppoſe I ſhould wiſh to divulge it! to

whom, but to Madame Veldentz, could you think I ſhould deſire to entruſt it? And, alas, I have no proſpect of again ſeeing her! ſhe is, doubtleſs, very far diſtant from Leipſic!"

"It was of Iſenburgh, (anſwered Sigiſmund,) that I was apprehenſive; he will, probably, return to his caſtle, before I am able to again quit Mansfeldt, (though I ſhall haſten to you with eager ſolicitude:) he will, then, doubtleſs, viſit you at this convent; and, notwithſtanding the friendſhip that once did, and the intimacy that ſtill ſubſiſts between us, I have many reaſons for withholding all confidence from him. Was it not that my return to Mansfeldt was ſo ſuddenly commanded by my father, I would have

ſought a reſidence for you in a convent, ſome diſtance from hence; but that ſtep is at preſent impoſſible: as to cauſe your removal from hence without the greateſt ſecreſy and circumſpection, would be at once hazarding the diſcloſure of what it is ſo neceſſary to conceal. I muſt carefully refrain from appearing much intereſted concerning you; and, however contrary to my wiſhes, allow you to remain at St. Agnes, till I can effect a ſcheme for removing you, without being, to appearance, concerned in your flight. If Iſenburgh ſhould return during my abſence, ſee him but ſeldom, I entreat; and remember, always to ſpeak of me with coolneſs and indifference. One reflection, that conſoles me in ſome meaſure at being thus con-

ſtrained to quit you, is, that you cannot be removed from St. Agnes againſt your inclination."

CHAP. IX.

O lady, weep no more, leſt I give cauſe
To be ſuſpected of more tenderneſs
Than doth become a man I will remain
The loyaleſt huſband that did e'er plight troth.

SHAKSPEAR.

WHEN the hour fixed for Sigiſmund's departure approached, Ethella, who had till then, to the extent of her fortitude, repreſſed unavailing regrets, no longer could conceal her

grief. Her tears fell faſt upon the ſhoulder of Sigiſmund, who, nearly as much afflicted as herſelf, attempted to alleviate her diſtreſs: in vain he bid her look forward to the happy days their re-union promiſed! in vain he aſſured her, that no abſence could diminiſh his inviolable love! Eſtella ſeemed incapable of conſolation; and the exclamation of, "Oh, Sigiſmund, we part to meet no more!" was the only ſentence ſhe could articulate. Her grief ſo entirely overcame Sigiſmund, that, when a ſervant entered to announce the horſes being in waiting, he ſhrunk from the unwelcome tidings, and, after ordering the ſervant to depart, declared he could not quit Leipſic that day, but would rather hazard his father's diſpleaſure, and the diſcovery even of

his marriage, than leave Eſtella in the diſtreſſing ſtate into which the proſpect of parting had thrown her.

However delighted Eſtella might feel for a few minutes at the rapturous idea of Sigiſmund's protracting his ſtay at Leipſic, a ſhort time convinced her of the riſk and impropriety of indulging preſent happineſs, to the deſtruction of future felicity; and, aſſuming all the reſolution ſhe poſſeſſed, ſhe entreated Sigiſmund to relinquiſh the idea her weakneſs had led him to adopt; and to perſiſt in his original plan, and commence his journey to Mansfeldt caſtle that day.

"Whenever the diſtreſſing moment ſhould arrive, deareſt Sigiſmund, (ſhe

continued,) that ſhould tear you from me, my ſorrow would be as poignant as at this moment! nay, it would be aggravated by the reflection, that I had induced you to act in oppoſition to your better judgment, and even rendered a diſcloſure of our union to be apprehended! Purſue, then, your firſt intentions; quit Leipſic today; I will inſtantly return to St. Agnes, and ſoften the grief that overpowers my boſom, by reflecting on your vows of conſtancy and love; and in nouriſhing the ſweet hope, that you will ſeize eagerly the firſt moment to return to your affectionate Eſtella."

After ſome time ſpent in tender argument upon this ſubject, Sigiſmund's wiſhes gave way to the reaſoning of

Eſtella; and, with mutual vows of everlaſting affection, they took a ſorrowful farewell. Sigiſmund mounting his horſe, rode ſlowly from the hotel; and Eſtella, with mournful ſteps, repaired to the convent of St. Agnes.

CHAP. X.

Ben s'ode il ragionar, fi vede il volto,
Ma dentro il cello mal guidicar puoffi.

THREE days after the departure of Sigiſmund, as Eſtella was ſitting in an alcove belonging to the convent gardens, her thoughts ſolely fixed upon the dear huſband of her affections, and anticipating the moment that ſhould

bring her intelligence from him, ſhe was ſuddenly informed, that a gentleman deſired earneſtly to ſpeak with her in the parlour.

A momentary dawn of pleaſure ruſhed over the mind of Eſtella, in the imagery, that Sigiſmund had probably returned; but two moments reflection convinced her of the fallacy of her hopes; and the idea that *Ifenburgh* was returned, and was the perſon then expecting her, overwhelmed her with chagrin. From Sigiſmund's manner in ſpeaking of his friend, the leaſt diſcerning might perceive his mind was tinctured with jealouſy; to converſe, therefore, in his abſence, with Ifenburgh, was, to her, painful and diſtreſſing; yet it was impoſſible ſhe

could refuſe to ſee one to whom ſhe was under ſo many obligations; but to prevent the frequency of Iſenburgh's viſits, ſhe determined to tell him, that the abbeſs ſtrongly objected to her ſeeing gentlemen at the Convent, and that her ſituation was too precarious to admit of her acting contrary to the regulations of the houſe.

Upon entering the parlour where Iſenburgh was ſitting, in the Convent, the embarraſſment of Eſtella was too powerful to permit her voice to welcome him. Her confuſion was too evident to eſcape his penetrating eyes; but, appearing not to obſerve it, he expreſſed himſelf in general terms, happy to ſee her again, and to obſerve health ſo viſible in her countenance;

at the ſame time apologizing for his haſty behaviour the laſt evening they had been together.

"But (continued he) though I am very ready to admit my conduct, that night ſcarce merits forgiveneſs, I am preſumptuous enough to hope that when you know the ſucceſs that has attended my abrupt departure, you will grant me that pardon I ſhould not otherwiſe dare to ſolicit."

"Indeed, Count Iſenburgh (anſwered Eſtella) you do me injuſtice in ſuppoſing I have harboured the ſmalleſt reſentment towards you."

"Then you deign to forgive me, (interrupted Iſenburgh), even before

you know that ſucceſs has crowned my endeavours in your behalf. How grateful I ought to be, and how careful in future, to reſtrain the natural impetuoſity of my temper! but, before I begin an account of my adventures, allow me to aſk, have you ſeen Sigiſmund lately? Much to my ſurpriſe and mortification, upon my arrival at home this morning, I found a letter from him to ſignify, that a ſummons from his father obliged his immediate return to Mansfeldt Caſtle! Can you tell me *when* he quitted Iſenburgh?'

At the mention of Sigiſmund's name, the deepeſt crimſon flushed over the cheeks of Eſtella, and as ſuddenly gave way to the moſt aſhy paleneſs, when ſhe replied,

"I think it is four or five days ſince he called here to bid me farewell."

"The ſociety of Sigiſmund is ſo ineſtimable to me (reſumed Iſenburgh), that I am always diſconcerted at the privation; yet never, I think, did I feel his loſs ſo ſeverely, or ſo ardently deſire his preſence and advice as at this juncture.

"I conſider you, Eſtella, as our joint ward, nor do I wiſh to act in any ſhape reſpecting you without his concurrence. I returned home this morning in the full conviction of finding him at the Caſtle; I will acknowledge, that I did not even think parental wiſhes would have influenced him to

quit this neighbourhood in my abſence, my ſurpriſe and diſappointment were therefore equally great."

"But, Count Iſenburgh, (cried Eſtella) you do not conſider that you are all this time exciting my curioſity, to know upon what ſubject that can regard me, you wiſhed to conſult your friend!"

"I wiſhed to prepare you, Eſtella, (returned Iſenburgh) for a piece of intelligence, that, no doubt, will agitate you. Have you ſufficient reſolution to hear intelligence of an old friend?"

"Oh! Count Iſenburgh, (replied Eſtella, eagerly) for heaven's ſake do not trifle with my feelings! you know

my little hiſtory; you know I have but one friend; ſay, then, quickly, have you, by good fortune, gained intelligence of Madame Veldentz?"

"Compoſe yourſelf, Eſtella, or I will be ſilent for ever, (anſwered Iſenburgh)."

"Oh! I am calm enough to hear every thing (returned Eſtella); do not torture me with ſuſpenſe; 'tis your ſilence, alone, that agitates me."

"Well, then, Eſtella, (replied Iſenburgh) I have not only diſcovered the ſecret reſidence of Madame Veldentz, but I have ſeen and diſcourſed with her; it is only four days ago ſince I quitted her habitation!"

" Moſt generous of men, (cried Eſtella, falling at the feet of Iſenburgh, in ſpite of his efforts to prevent her), words are inadequate to convey the feelings of my grateful heart! you elevate me above myſelf! what, ſhall I again ſee my dear governeſs; ſhall we never part again?"

" Oh! Count Iſenburgh, may your unprecedented generoſity receive the abundant recompenſe from heaven that it ſo richly deſerves!"

" You eſtimate too highly, that which proceeds from the moſt common feelings, (returned Iſenburgh, apparently confuſed at the warmth of Eſtella's gratitude), every one, in circumſtances like myſelf, muſt ſurely have acted

ſimilar! But, Eſtella, I have a letter for you; yet your agitation is ſo exceſſive that I own I tremble to deliver it."

"Give it me, pray, give it me, (haſtily replied Eſtella); I am not agitated, I am quite compoſed."

Iſenburgh drew a letter from his pocket book, directed to Eſtella, and after announcing to her that the contents would not be thoroughly agreeable, and conjuring her to ſummons her reſolution, delivered a letter into her hands, and ſhe read as follows:

"*TO ESTELLA.*

"My dear child, haſten to me, let me embrace you and unfold the

myſtery of your birth, whilſt I am able! what have I not ſuffered ſince I was over perſuaded to abandon you! but the generous friend who has exerted himſelf in your behalf, will convey you to me, (Oh! that I was able to haſten with him to you), you ſhall then hear every myſterious part of my conduct explained.

" A. VELDENTZ."

" Oh! let me fly to her (exclaimed Eſtella, upon finiſhing the above), let me fly to her inſtantly. Count Iſenburgh, deign to direct me, you have aſſuredly promiſed as much to my poor governeſs, who, from her billet, is ill, perhaps dying! And unleſs I fly to her inſtantly, death will deprive me of receiving her laſt ſighs! But, by

what miracle did you diſcover her abode?"

"The moſt ſedulous care would not, perhaps, have effected that diſcovery, had not chance aided my endeavours, (anſwered Iſenburgh.) I travelled near a fortnight, making every poſſible enquiry, at every village and town that promiſed a glimmering of ſucceſs: my efforts were fruitleſs, till one day, in paſſing the gates of an antique caſtle in a very remote ſituation, my horſe ſtarting at the ſudden appearance of ſome poultry, threw me, and I remained, I know not how long, ſenſeleſs. Upon recovering my ſenſes, I found myſelf on a ſofa, in a large and well-furniſhed room, and attended by two women, ſeemingly

domeſtics; and from them learned, that, alarmed at my ſituation when thrown from my horſe, my attendants had rang at the bell, and requeſted aſſiſtance from the caſtle, which had been inſtantly given. Finding myſelf reſtored by the cordials they had adminiſtered, I prepared to depart, firſt begging to ſee the owner of the caſtle, that I might return the thanks I owed for my hoſpitable treatment. I was anſwered, that the lady of the caſtle was too ill to ſee any perſon; I therefore commiſſioned them to return my acknowledgments, begging at the ſame time to know the *name* of my benevolent entertainer; and judge my ſurpriſe, at hearing that of Madame Veldentz. The idea, that my hoſteſs was probably the very Ma-

dame Veldentz that I was ſeeking, deprived me for ſome minutes of ſpeech; but, recovering myſelf, I eagerly enquired of my informers, if Madame Veldentz was newly arrived at that ſpot? They were ſilent, and looked at each other. I repeated my enquiries; they were yet ſilent: then tearing a leaf from my pocket-book, I wrote, "If Madame Veldentz wiſhes to hear news of Eſtella, a perſon in the caſtle can give her intereſting information." I entreated the ſenior of my attendants to convey it to her miſtreſs; ſhe obeyed, and in a few minutes returned with a meſſage from Madame Veldentz, entreating to ſee me inſtantly. I flew to her apartment, and found her in bed, ſupported by pillows, pale and emaciated! I briefly recounted

to her my meeting with you, and its conſequences: her agitation was really alarming, and, with many tears, ſhe informed me, that ſhe had been wretched ſince the day when ſhe had been induced to quit you; that the bad ſtate of her health had alone prevented her from herſelf ſeeking you; a violent fever having attacked her very ſhortly after her departure from the foreſt, but that ſhe had ſent many perſons in fruitleſs enquiries after you; and finiſhed her ſpeech, by moſt earneſtly adjuring me to bring you to her with all ſpeed, leſt ſhe ſhould be ſnatched from this world before ſhe could make the confeſſion that hung upon her lips, and which was ſo eſſential to your happineſs to learn! To render you more anxious to comply with her

wiſhes, ſhe wrote (though with great difficulty) the letter I have already delivered to you." "Oh, let me go to her this inſtant, (cried Eſtella,) I cannot reſt till I have again beheld her!"

"Do not go till you have conſulted Sigiſmund, (replied Iſenburgh;) might he not blame the precipitancy of your conduct?"

"This is unkind, Count Iſenburgh, (returned Eſtella,) all ſarcaſm, at a time like this, ſhould be withheld; even if Sigiſmund had a right to controul my actions, would he blame me for haſtening to my firſt friend, in ſuch circumſtances?"

"Oh, pardon me, Eſtella, (anſwered Iſenburgh,) I meant not to diſtreſs you. I will, this inſtant, order my travelling carriage, with a female ſervant, to attend you, and we will quit Leipſic the moment you deſire."

"This inſtant let me depart! (cried Eſtella,) I ſhall not enjoy a moment's eaſe till I commence the journey."

Iſenburgh withdrew for a few minutes, to give neceſſary inſtructions to his ſervants; but preſently returning, announced to Eſtella, his wiſh to write to Sigiſmund before their departure, to inform him of the intelligence they had gained concerning Madame Veldentz. Eſtella aſſented to his ac-

quainting Sigiſmund with the tidings; but declared, that, upon no conſideration could ſhe permit him to put himſelf to the trouble of eſcorting her. "If you are ſo kind (added ſhe) as to allow your carriage to convey me, it will be all that is neceſſary, and much more than I have any right to expect!"

"And can you really ſuppoſe me ſo negligent of you, Eſtella? (anſwered Iſenburgh.) It is abſolutely neceſſary that you have a proper guardian to conduct you ſo many leagues; and aſſuredly, as you are circumſtanced, no one is *ſo* proper as myſelf. Do not, therefore, oppoſe me in this inſtance; however repugnant to my inclinations

to act contrary to your wiſhes, I muſt be peremptory!"

Eſtella knew not what to reply. Iſenburgh's manner ſeemed reſolute and determined: ſhe had no longer courage to oppoſe him; and the extatic pleaſure which fancy pictured of beholding Madame Veldentz, rendered her almoſt indifferent to the means that led to that deſired end; ſhe was, therefore, ſilent, whilſt the eyes of Iſenburgh gliſtened with tranſport at the acquieſcence.

The Count then ſeating himſelf at a table, ſignified his deſign of writing to his friend, and looking at Eſtella, ſaid,

"Do you not think it would be highly gratifying to Sigifmund, if you would condefcend to fend him a few lines?"

"Would it be neceffary? (replied Eftella with fome hefitation.) Would there not be an impropriety ——?" "An impropriety! (refumed Ifenburgh,) you are really faftidious, Eftella! but, ferioufly, it will be a fatisfaction to *me*, if you will addrefs a fhort letter to him."

Eftella endeavoured to write, but the idea that Ifenburgh would probably view the letter, involved her in fo much embarraffment, that fhe found herfelf unable to dictate a fingle line. She wifhed to write to Sigifmund con-

fidentially, but to do ſo was impoſſible, whilſt there was a probability that Iſenburgh might behold her writing. Not knowing therefore how to act, ſhe ſat playing with the pen, and twiſting the paper, till ſhe perceived Iſenburgh was folding up his own packet; and the found of a carriage, driving into the court yard of the convent, which ſhe believed to be that that was to convey her from its walls, gave freſh force to her ideas, and ſhe haſtily wrote:

"*TO SIGISMUND.*

"Count Iſenburgh has, no doubt, explained the motives of my conduct, which, might otherwiſe, ſubject me to reprehenſion. As circumſtances are,

you cannot blame me for accepting the ſervices of that generous friend, and placing myſelf under his protection.

" ADIEU."

Eſtella had ſcarce finiſhed her own little billet, when Iſenburgh put the letter he had juſt written into her hand, and begged her to read over the contents: it conſiſted of an account ſimilar to what he had already given of his journey, and unexpected meeting with Madame Veldentz, of the determination of Eſtella inſtantly to fly to her governeſs; and concluded with many regrets at Sigiſmund's unexpected abſence.

The carriage being ready, Eſtella haſtily took leave of the abbeſs, (to whom Iſenburgh ſaid, he had related that intelligence from a very dear friend, occaſioned her abrupt departure;) and giving her hand to Iſenburgh, was ſeated in the chaiſe, which drove with rapid velocity from the convent, and they were ſoon many miles diſtant from Leipſic.

CHAP. XI.

Eſtella! what an angel haddſt thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been plac'd
About the thoughts and counſels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, moſt foul, moſt fair! farewell,
Thou pure impiety, and impious purity!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids ſhall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,
And never ſhall it more be gracious.

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER travelling, with undeſcribable celerity, on the evening of the fourth day from their quitting Leipſic,

Eſtella, with Iſenburgh, arrived at a large antique manſion, inſulated by an extenſive park.

As ſhe approached the ſpot where ſhe expected to behold the friend of her juvenile years, the feelings of Eſtella became even painfully violent; and, when the carriage ſtopped at the entrance to the caſtle, her ſenſes entirely forſook her, and ſhe was liſted into a large, but Gothic hall, devoid of motion.

The domeſtic that had attended during their journey, aſſiſted by Iſenburgh, adminiſtered different aids to reſtore her to life, and in a ſhort time their efforts ſucceeded; and the firſt words ſhe uttered were, "Where is

Madame Veldentz? I conjure you, carry me to her inſtantly!"

"Pardon me, Eſtella, (cried Iſenburgh,) but the interview muſt not take place to night; you are fatigued and haraſſed by the length of your journey; and you already know Madame Valdentz is an invalid. To meet, therefore, now, might be highly prejudicial to both parties; and I entreat you, if not for your ſake, if you value the repoſe and health of Madame Veldentz, to deſiſt from your intention of ſeeing her at preſent."

In vain Eſtella repreſented, that to ſee *her* would renovate the en-

feebled ſpirits of her governeſs, and, at the ſame time, diſſipate her own uneaſineſs.

Iſenburgh was firm and obſtinate; and, after trying every argument to effect her wiſh, Eſtella was at laſt conſtrained to be ſatisfied with his promiſe, that he would himſelf conduct her to Madame Veldentz early on the following day.

Iſenburgh then inſiſted upon carrying Eſtella to the banquet hall, where a magnificent ſupper was prepared, but all his efforts to induce *her* to partake of it were fruitleſs; and, after ſwallowing ſome weak wine and water, ſhe entreated the attendants of Ulrique,

(the perſon who had accompanied her from Leipſic,) and begged to retire to her apartment.

She was conducted to a large and ſuperbly furniſhed room, in which, to her great ſatisfaction, ſhe found a ſmall pallet bed for Ulrique, placed adjacent to the magnificent one deſigned for herſelf; and, after commending herſelf to the protection of Providence, (notwithſtanding the anxiety of her mind to behold Madame Veldentz,) fatigue ſo entirely overpowered her, that ſhe ſoon ſunk into ſleep.

The following morning ſhe did not awake, till Ulrique, in a ſoft tone, acquainted her, that Count Iſenburgh

had ſent a meſſage, to requeſt her company to breakfaſt.

Eager to ſee, in order to remind him of his aſſurance of conducting her to Madame Veldentz, Eſtella ſprung from the bed, and aſſiſted by her attendant, was ſoon dreſſed, when, precipitately quitting her apartment, ſhe hurried to that in which ſhe expected to find Iſenburgh. Upon entering it, Iſenburgh haſtily aroſe, and conducting her to a ſeat adjoining to his own, at the breakfaſt table, addreſſed her in a ſtrain of mingled gallantry and compliment, which both ſurpriſed and vexed her.

To check a mode of behaviour ſo diſtreſſing to her feelings, Eſtella re-

plied to him with the moſt frigid coolneſs; and, refuſing the cup of chocolate he aſſiduouſly offered to her, deſired to be that inſtant conducted to Madame Veldentz's chamber.

"I have ſuffered myſelf fooliſhly to be detained from ſeeing her too long, (ſhe continued,) but no power ſhall prevent me from this inſtant flying to her!"

"Madame Veldentz cannot ſee you to day, fair Eſtella," (returned Iſenburgh, with provoking nonchalance.)

Eſtella, caſting a look replete with indignation upon him, roſe from her ſeat, and haſtened towards the door:

Iſenburgh ſprung forwards, and rudely ſtopped her.

"We part not thus, (he cried,) the time is now come when all ſubterfuge is unneceſſary: we will now come to an explanation."

"An explanation! (retorted Eſtella,) What explanation can be neceſſary? Let go my arm, Count Iſenburgh; I will not be detained another inſtant!"

"Nay, hear me." (replied Iſenburgh, ſtill holding her.)

"I conſider myſelf in Madame Veldentz's houſe, (reſumed Eſtella,

haughtily,) and look upon myſelf empowered to diſmiſs from it, thoſe who demean themſelves with violence and incivility towards me. Leave me, therefore, this moment, Count Iſenburgh, nor preſume again to appear in my preſence!"

"Upon my word, my charming Eſtella, (anſwered Iſenburgh, laughing,) I never could have believed ſo much *ſpirit* inhabited that ſeeming gentle boſom! You have certainly a mind to charm me by thus diſplaying a new character! and your ſucceſs is already confirmed in my heart. Variety is my idol; an eternal ſameneſs palls the imagination; but the woman who is one moment diſſolving

in languiſhing ſoftneſs, and the next ſparkling with lively paſſion, blends two ſuch delightful extremes, that her empire over the ſoul muſt be alike; boundleſs, and full of rapture!"

"I am willing to believe, Count Iſenburgh, (replied Eſtella, intimidated by the vehemence of his manner,) that I have miſconſtrued your intentions; and that what ſtartled me for a few moments, ſimply aroſe from the vivacity of your diſpoſition. Allow me, therefore, to ſeek Madame Veldentz, and, be aſſured, I will never remember what has juſt paſſed, but as the effuſions of ill-judged pleaſantry." "There ſpoke the *gentle* Eſtella! (exclaimed Iſenburgh,) but, at any

rate, it is my intereſt and deſire to receive pardon. Serioufly, deareſt Eſtella, I have been to blame in hurrying on my explanation too rapidly! but let the diſcovery be ever ſo important, when it reſts with me to unfold, the tale muſt be delivered in a plain, and, perhaps, abrupt manner; for long prefaces, and tedious digreſſions, are my ſoul's abhorrence."

"To the point then! It is impoſſible that you can have known me the length of time you have done, without perceiving the violent impreſſion you have made upon my heart! Yes; I will repeat that which you already know ſo well: I love you with an unconquerable affection!"

Eſtella ſhuddered as Iſenburgh pronounced theſe words; but, without ſeeming to obſerve her emotions, he continued:

"Diſtracted with jealouſy to perceive the preference your heart gave Sigiſmund, and aware of the return your love received from him, I determined, at all hazards, to ſeparate you; for which purpoſe, I abſented myſelf from my caſtle to give colour to my intended ſcheme; gave the requiſite orders for this manſion being prepared to receive you; fabricated the ridiculous ſtory of my finding your ancient governeſs, (whoſe hand writing I found means to imitate, by ſecreting the letter you ſhewed when related your

ſtory,) and when the whole plot was laid, and the denoument alone wanting, tranſported myſelf to St. Agnes, and ſecured my prize! And now, Eſtella, when I remind you, that you are ſolely in my power, that Sigiſmund believes that you voluntarily accepted my protection, it is ſurely ſuperfluous to add, that regret and anger cannot poſſibly be of any ſervice, but that both prudence and intereſt ſhould inſtruct you to beſtow that love I ſolicit. Over my heart and fortune you reign abſolute ſovereign! Speak but what you would deſire your ſettlement to be, and I will even double your expectations! Myſelf and fortune are ſolely at your command; and the moſt aſſiduous love, will, I hope,

in time, entitle me to a pre-eminent ſhare in your affections."

Iſenburgh would have proceeded, but the unhappy and deceived Eſtella, wrought up to a pitch of undeſcribable miſery at the developement of the artifice that had entangled her in the net of her perſecutor, ſunk motionleſs upon the ſofa. Alarmed at her ſituation, Iſenburgh furiouſly rang the bell, and ſummoning Ulrique, and the principal part of his female domeſtics, ordered them to convey the fainting Eſtella to her apartment, and to uſe every method to promote her recovery.

Placed upon her bed, and afforded every relief that could be offered,

Eſtella ſpeedily recovered that ſenſibility, of which horror and grief had deprived her.

Keenly alive to the frightful aſpect of her deſtiny, her tears and lamentations, upon recovering her ſenſes, were unceaſing, and penetrated the hearts of her attendants with ſympathy.

At the end of two hours, a meſſage was delivered from Iſenburgh, requeſting to ſee her. Eſtella, who had for a few moments appeared more compoſed, upon hearing his intention of intruding upon her, burſt into an increaſed agony of tears, and conjured her attendants, in the moſt

pathetic manner, at any rate, to delay the intended visit.

Softened by her grief, the women informed Ifenburgh, that she was really too ill to see him; and Ifenburgh, half distracted at the intelligence, reiterated his commands of unremitting attention, intermingling his orders with wild threats and extravagant promises.

For four days Ifenburgh was dissuaded from seeing Estella; but, on the fifth, his impatience over-leaping every other consideration, he sent her a peremptory message, signifying, that, unless she would deign to meet him in the breakfast parlour, he would, in-

ſtantly, forcibly obtain an audience in her dreſſing-room.

Terrified and alarmed, Eſtella repaired to the breakfaſt parlour, where ſhe found Iſenburgh traverſing the apartment in apparent agitation.

"Oh, Count Iſenburgh! (ſhe exclaimed,) for pity's ſake be merciful towards me! Send me back to St. Agnes, I conjure you! The affection with which you condeſcend to honour me I never can return; then ceaſe to perſecute an unhappy creature, but reſtore her to the aſylum where her perſon was ſheltered, and her woes alleviated." "This is not a ſeaſon for nonſenſical intreaty; (anſwered Iſenburgh.) Is it natural that, after

the hazards I have run upon your account, I ſhould yield my prize before I have been allowed time ſufficient to gain your affections? But this is not the ſubject upon which I wiſh to diſcourſe with you. I have this morning received letters from Sigiſmund; he is dangerouſly ill; your elopement ſeems to have filled him with aſtoniſhment; but here is a letter addreſſed to yourſelf. The contents, upon my honour, are unknown to me: perhaps, in that, he explains his feelings!"

At theſe words, Iſenburgh preſented Eſtella with a letter, directed to her in the hand writing of Sigiſmund. Her agitation was for a few minutes too violent to permit her to

break the ſeal; and her grief, upon peruſing the following ſhort lines, was too agonizing to admit deſcription.

"*TO ESTELLA.*

"Upon firſt peruſing the billet you had the effrontery to write, which confirmed the heart-rending reports already conveyed to me, in a tranſport of mental anguiſh, I reſolved never again to ſee or remember you.

"The firſt reſolution I will religiouſly keep; the latter, I will, for this once, deviate from. To tell you, Eſtella, I renounce you eternally, that no penitence can obtain your pardon,

but your infamous ſeducer ſhall yet find, I have an avenging arm to redreſs thoſe wrongs with which he has eternally branded me.

" SIGISMUND MANSFELDT."

Oh, merciful Providence! (exclaimed Eſtella, wildly riſing from her ſeat,) can nature bear this ſtroke! Is it not ſufficient to be betrayed in the arts of falſhood and treachery; muſt I, in addition, be cruelly upbraided? Let me go! Let me fly this inſtant! I will ſee Sigiſmund! I will convince him of my innocence! Then confine me; kill me if you pleaſe! I will not repine, or even murmur!"

" This is the wild rhapſody of unmeaning paſſion!" (cried Iſenburgh,

forcibly leading her back to her ſeat.) Of what conſequence to you is the opinion of Sigiſmund? You are not accountable to him for your actions; then why regard his puerile reproaches?

"That Sigiſmund loved you, I am not to learn: and, though I yet conſider him as an inſignificant rival, I glory in having torn you from him, and having ſecured you even from his knowledge."

"Ah, there you deceive yourſelf, Count Heuburgh; (returned Eſtella,) Sigiſmund knows where I am; or, could he have ſent me that diſtreſſing letter?"

"Indeed, Eſtella, he does *not*!" (replied Iſenburgh, with apparent exultation,) Sigiſmund has yet to learn the place of our concealment."

"Previous to quitting Leipſic, I diſpatched to Mansfeldt a confidential ſervant, with the letter you addreſſed to Sigiſmund, from St. Agnes; at the ſame time commiſſioning the man to announce, that you had accepted my offers, placed yourſelf under my protection, and ſet off with me for Arieſheim; (which is above two hundred and fifty leagues from the ſpot where we are at preſent:) judge, then, how little Sigiſmund knows of your real ſituation; and, believe me, that, even if he were ſufficiently ro-

mantic to purſue us, months muſt elapſe before he could accompliſh his aim."

"And what opinion do you expect me to entertain of you, Count Iſenburgh, when you daily unfold a freſh ſcene of wickedneſs and diſſimulation?" (enquired Eſtella, with all the firmneſs ſhe could aſſume.) Even had you been eſteemed by me, the developement of ſo much treachery and artifice, would render you for ever deſpicable and odious to me!"

"Women always pardon what their beauty occaſions." (Replied Iſenburgh careleſsly.)

"Falſe, falſe aſſertion!" (anſwered Eſtella, emphatically;) but, in the

commencement of your diſcourſe, you affirmed Sigiſmund to be ill: pray heaven that is not the caſe?"

"I repeat, he is dangerouſly ill, (cried Iſenburgh.) My ſervant informed me the whole caſtle was in confuſion upon his account; the mother in tears, the father ſending expreſſes to all the doctors in the diſtrict. If you continue incredulous, I will call up Holſtein, and you ſhall yourſelf interrogate him."

"Oh, no, no! (cried Eſtella, in undeſcribable agony,) the meaſure of my woes are now filled!"

Suffocated by her tears, further utterance was denied Eſtella; and Iſen-

burgh, partly melted by her grief, reluctantly permitted her to retire to her own apartment.

CHAP. XII.

No time shall raze thee from my memory;
No, I will live to be thy monument:
Ah, in my heart thou art interr'd; there, there,
Thy dear resemblance in the ever fix'd!
My love, my lord, my husband still, tho' lost!

CONGREVE.

THE grief and agitation experienced by Estella, at the heart-rending reflection, that Sigismund believed her unfaithful to the vows she

had plighted, added to the frightful idea that ſhe was friendleſs, and in the power of Iſenburgh, was nearly too much for her already exhauſted frame to ſupport.

Upon repairing to her apartment, (though ſurrounded by the women placed to attend her by the order of Iſenburgh,) her ſorrow and lamentation knew no bounds.

Throwing herſelf upon a couch, and covering her face with a handkerchief, ſhe ſeemed inſenſible of the preſence of her attendants, and alive only to the violence of her affliction.

'To loſe the love of Sigiſmund, was, to loſe the only bleſſing that

attached her to life! Sigiſmund, dearer to her than exiſtence, and whoſe very anger ſerved but to heighten her affection, ſince it demonſtrated the ſincerity of his attachment!

Yet this beloved object, upon the bed of ſickneſs, believed her faithleſs and criminal; and her cruel deſtiny ſeemed to forbid any method of exculpating herſelf, and flying from the hateful tyranny of Iſenburgh.

The continuance of her extreme grief ſeemed to ſoften the boſom of Ulrique, (her principal waiting woman,) who endeavoured to meliorate her anguiſh; but Eſtella's mind was too deeply wounded to liſten to the

common condolings of pity, and, for ſome hours, her tears were unabating, and the name of Sigiſmund would involuntarily eſcape her lips, accompanied by the moſt pathetic lamentations, till a gleam of hope dawned over her mind, that, could ſhe obtain the friendſhip of her attendant, ſhe might, probably, through her means, effect her eſcape from the power of Iſenburgh.

Reanimated by this idea, Eſtella teſtified the moſt lively gratitude for the attentions of Ulrique, and ſignified a viſible preference in her favor; but after ſome time, when ſhe endeavoured to prevail upon her to favor her flight, (repreſenting ſhe was unjuſtly detained, and had been ſeduced to the caſtle,

by deceit and falfehood); fhe was grieved and difappointed to find Ulrique liftened coldly to her pleadings, and finally to proteft her duty to Count Ifenburgh would not permit her to act in oppofition to his will.

Notwithftanding the diftrefs their laft interview had occafioned to Eftella, Ifenburgh, perfifted in daily forcing himfelf into her prefence; fometimes painting his paffion in the moft lively and foftened colours, at others, endeavouring to intimidate her by threats.

At the expiration of a week, as Eftella, bathed in tears, was contemplating the cruel letter fhe had received from Sigifmund, and offering up prayers to heaven, to afford her an

opportunity of clearing herſelf to him, Iſenburgh abruptly entered the apartment, and, ſeating himſelf by her, cried,

"I have juſt received unpleaſant tidings; Eſtella, I ſhall expect you to join in my diſtreſs."

Eſtella raiſed her eyes from the paper ſhe was reading, and fixed them, for a few minutes, reproachfully upon Iſenburgh, then ſighing, again turned them upon the dear, though cruel letter.

Iſenburgh continued. "I thought, Eſtella, you would not have been thus indifferent to what related to poor Sigiſmund!"

"" Sigiſmund!" (eagerly exclaimed Eſtella), have you heard from Sigiſmund?"

Iſenburgh viewed her for ſome minutes in ſilence; the malignancy that beamed from his eyes, terrified and confounded her; for ſome time they both remained ſilent; at length Iſenburgh ſaid,

"I fear to alarm you, the lively intereſt you ſo *candidly* profeſs for my poor friend, renders me apprehenſive that the ſad event I have to unfold may overpower your *tender* feelings."

"Oh! merciful powers, (cried Eſtella), what have you to announce?"

"I am really very much concerned, (replied Ifenburgh), and your agitation adds to my trouble. Poor Sigifmund"—

"Is dead! (ſhrieked Eſtella, in almoſt breathleſs agony); your words, your looks, every thing confirms it!"

"'Tis too true, (anſwered Ifenburgh); I have loſt the beloved companion of my childhood, the valued friend of my riper years."

The grief and diſtreſs of Eſtella at this afflicting intelligence, nearly amounted to diſtraction. The preſence of Ifenburgh was no reſtraint, ſhe yielded to the agony of her feelings

and uttered every thing deſpair could dictate.

Far from ſoftened by her diſtreſs; Iſenburgh obſerved her with gloomy anger, and it was not till her pallid cheek, and half cloſed eyes, ſeemed to declare ſhe was near fainting, that he ſummoned the aſſiſtance of her women, and to their charge conſigned her, with the ſtricteſt injunctions that ſhe ſhould receive every care and attention.

During ſeveral days that a violent fever ſeemed to threaten, ultimately, the life of Eſtella, Iſenburgh appeared in a ſtate nearly bordering upon phrenzy; conſtantly in an anti-chamber adjoining her apartment, he almoſt

momentarily made enquiries concerning her, and every inſtant uttered freſh directions for procuring an increaſe of medical advice.

On the fifth day of her illneſs, the principal phyſician, who attended, delivered it as his opinion, that her complaint approached the criſis, and that her ſtrength would fail, at the important moment.

Diſtracted at the information, Ifenburgh wildly exclaimed,

"Save her life, and command my fortune! 'Tis I, alone, that am her murderer! Oh, merciful Providence, this is too much to be endured!" And,

in ſpite of every effort to detain him, he rushed into the apartment of Eſtella.

A profound ſilence reigned; he approached the bed; Eſtella lay entranced in a deep ſleep; the carnation of her cheeks was fled; a lily paleneſs ſpread over her countenance, yet was her beauty as eminently conſpicuous as at the firſt moment he had beheld her!

Sorrow and compunction overwhelmed him, and, kneeling by her bed ſide, he ſolemnly vowed, if her life was ſpared, to expiate the wrongs he had deſigned, by an honourable marriage.

When forced from the ſick chamber, the diſtreſs of Iſenburgh ſeemed to derive increaſing ſtrength: he, at ſome moments, ſoothed the phyſicians, and promiſed, that could they reſtore Eſtella, their rewards ſhould be boundleſs; at others, threatened them with the moſt rigorous puniſhment in caſe of her diſſolution.

The natural good conſtitution Eſtella poſſeſſed, once more befriended her; and, contrary to the expectation of her attendants, her illneſs took a ſudden and favourable turn

The joy of Iſenburgh upon her convaleſcence, was as frantic, as his deſpair during her danger had been vehement; and her medical attend-

ants, as well as nurſes, were laden with acknowledgments, both pecuniary and perſonal.

CHAP. XIII.

——————— What envious ſtreaks
Do lace the ſevering clouds in yonder Eaſt:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the miſty mountains' tops.
I muſt be gone——

THOUGH health was reſtored to Eſtella, ſhe continued a prey to the moſt tormenting diſquietude; grief, for the loſs of Sigiſmund, preyed upon her

mind, and the honourable intentions that Iſenburgh avowed, filled her with chagrin and terror.

Had ſhe never known Sigiſmund, her ſentiments and diſpoſition were ſo oppoſite to thoſe of Iſenburgh, that it would have been impoſſible for her voluntarily to have conſented to a union, notwithſtanding his rank and fortune.

What then were her ſenſations, whilſt idolizing the memory of her huſband, and reſolutely determining never to enter into a ſecond engagement; upon reflecting that ſhe was in the power of a violent and overbearing man, the ſlave of his paſſions, who imagined, that, in offering mar-

riage, he extenuated every previous cauſe of offence; and whoſe propoſals, though ſhe reſolved never to accept, ſhe yet trembled at the conſequences of refuſing.

To fly from the caſtle, and place herſelf under the protection of the Baroneſs Mansfeldt, was the ſummit of her deſires. Sigiſmund had always painted his mother in ſuch amiable colours, that, though unknown, ſhe experienced for her an undeſcribable love and veneration: yet the remembrance of the ſolemn promiſe with which ſhe had bound herſelf to Sigiſmund, never to diſcloſe their union, precluded every idea of claiming her protection, any otherwiſe, than as a friendleſs and unprotected female; but

the character ſhe had heard of the Baroneſs for benevolence and goodneſs, induced her to hope ſhe ſhould not ſolicit in vain.

The idea was, doubtleſs, romantic; but Eſtella was very young, inexperienced and friendleſs; and, at the ſmalleſt ſhadow of hope, ſhe eagerly graſped.

But to effect an eſcape from the power of Iſenburgh, ſeemed almoſt impracticable. She was conſtantly watched throughout the day-time, and at night, Ulrique ſlept in her chamber, yet difficulty could not baniſh the idea from her mind; and whilſt, to lull the ſuſpicions of Iſenburgh and his domeſtics, ſhe appeared more calm

and reſigned than ſince her reſidence at the caſtle, ſhe was revolving freſh ſchemes to eſcape from it for ever.

Iſenburgh, in the mean while, endeavoured to diſſipate the viſible melancholy of Eſtella, by unremitting attention, and to engage her affection by the moſt artful and inſinuating conduct; but though apprehenſive of irritating him, ſhe attempted to conceal the averſion he had inſpired; in ſpite of her efforts, her diſlike was ſo apparent, it was frequently difficult to him to refrain from giving vent to his anger, and reproaching her with the coldneſs with which ſhe liſtened to his proteſtations of affection.

Eſtella had ſufficiently recovered from her illneſs to walk in the air. Attended by Ulrique, and another female ſervant, ſhe had taken a long walk in the extenſive gardens belonging to the caſtle, (the lofty walls and iron gates of which ſeemed to extinguiſh every hope ſhe had cheriſhed of eſcaping,) when Iſenburgh ſuddenly appeared before her.

Exerciſe had reſtored the roſes to her cheeks that illneſs had diſſipated, and never had ſhe appeared ſo lovely in the eyes of Iſenburgh, as at that inſtant. He ordered the women to retire, and then ſoftening his manner, addreſſed Eſtella, informing her, with many expreſſions of tenderneſs, that

the prieſt was arrived, and that he flattered himſelf, as her health was ſo viſibly reſtored, ſhe would conſent to their union taking place that evening, or the following morning.

Eſtella turned pale. "It cannot be this evening; (ſhe faultering ſaid,) it is impoſſible!"

"Tomorrow, then, deareſt Eſtella, (returned Iſenburgh,) and we will then quit this ſpot, and viſit ſome of my diſtant eſtates. Travelling will be ſerviceable to your health."

Eſtella derived courage from the mildneſs ſhe perceived in Iſenburgh's manner.

"Count Iſenburgh, (ſhe exclaimed,) I cannot permit you to nouriſh the idea, that I can ever unite my deſtiny to yours! By deſiring it, you do me infinite honour, and I am gratéful for your intentions; but obſtacles, that never can be removed, oppoſe ſuch a marriage; and, be aſſured, you have now heard my final reſolution!"

Iſenburgh could not conceal his diſpleaſure at this declaration: he demanded to know the *reaſons* that actuated her refuſal; and made uſe of every poſſible argument to induce her to comply with his propoſals, or to diſcloſe the cauſe of their rejection. Eſtella was immovable; and the anger

and diſappointment of Iſenburgh encreaſed.

"Tomorrow, (he added, vehemently,) the chapel will be prepared for our nuptials, and the prieſt in readineſs to hear our vows; diſpoſe yourſelf, therefore, Eſtella, to meet me at the altar, and become my wife by inclination. The offer never ſhall be again repeated: if, therefore, it is not willingly accepted, compulſion ſhall make you my miſtreſs. You now know the alternative; decide as you think proper, but I will no longer be trifled with!"

With theſe words, Iſenburgh quitted Eſtella; and, terrified and con-

founded, ſhe was reconducted to her apartment.

The remaining part of the day was paſſed by Eſtella in endeavouring to eſcape from the deteſted power of Iſenburgh, previous to the time he had appointed for their nuptials.

She traverſed the long ſuite of rooms appropriated for her uſe, and again examined, if the thick bars of iron which Iſenburgh had taken the precaution to fix on the outſide of the windows, could be removed by an effort of violence. They reſiſted all her attempts; and, fearful ſhe might be obſerved making the endeavour, ſhe returned to the room in

which ſhe had left Ulrique and Gertrude.

Upon entering the apartment, ſhe found them unpacking ſome large trunks, and taking from them ſome rich, and elegantly fancied dreſſes.

"Obſerve, my dear lady, (cried Ulrique,) what beautiful cloaths Count Iſenburgh has ordered for you! They are but this inſtant arrived; he wiſhed to ſurpriſe you!"

"They are very handſome, (returned Eſtella, coldly,) but they are not for me."

"Oh, yes, indeed, my lady, but they are all for you; (anſwered Ul-

rique,) which will you pleaſe to ſelect for tomorrow? This, white and ſilver, would, I think, become you, and be very ſuitable."

Eſtella ſhook her head, and was ſilent; in the mean time, her attendants, delighted at viewing the ſplendid attire, continued taking the different dreſſes from the cheſts, and ſpreading them upon the chairs and ſofas.

"Well, now, (continued Ulrique,) this is ſurpriſing! If here is not an entire mourning robe! Who could have ſuppoſed that any one could be ſo ridiculous to mingle *black* with bridal finery!"

Eſtella, from the time ſhe had heard the afflicting intelligence of Sigiſmund's death, had ardently deſired to ſhew her reſpect for his memory by wearing mourning; but, circumſtanced as ſhe then was, to obtain a black dreſs, was impoſſible, and ſhe had had no other means of evincing her inclination, than by refraining from wearing *colours*, and girding a black ribbon round her waiſt; the ſight, therefore, of the black robe, renewed all her wiſhes, and even determined her to overcome her ſcruples of accepting a preſent from Iſenburgh; and, much to the aſtoniſhment of Ulrique and Gertrude, ſhe deſired them to prepare that robe for her wearing the following morning.

Night came, but brought with it no hopes of flying from Iſenburgh. Eſtella went mournfully to bed; ſleep was a ſtranger to her eye-lids; her anxiety increaſed with every ſucceeding hour which the great clock belonging to the caſtle announced.

At length morning dawned, and the clock tolled five! Eſtella ſtarted from her bed: one great effort was neceſſary; if ſhe failed, could ſhe be more wretched than at that period? If ſhe ſhould ſucceed!——

The probability of ſucceſs reanimated her courage: ſhe ſoftly opened the curtains of the bed in which Ulrique ſlept, and perceived her in a

profound ſleep. Cautiouſly cloſing them, ſhe commenced dreſſing herſelf with trepidation. The box, containing the mourning robe was in the chamber. Eſtella could not reſiſt the temptation, but, opening the lid, took out the dreſs, and haſtily wrapped herſelf in its drapery.

A large peliſe belonging to Ulrique being near the bottom of her bed, with a projecting bonnet, made in the manner of the country people, ſtruck Eſtella's eyes, and the idea flaſhed acroſs her imagination, that enveloped in them, (as her figure bore ſome reſemblance to that of her attendant,) ſhe might eſcape detection, ſhould ſhe chance to meet any of the ſervants of the caſtle.

Taking, therefore, her purſe, and dividing the little ſum it contained, ſhe put one half with the part of her wardrobe, too heavy to be removed by her own hands, and, with a pencil, directed them for Ulrique, as a compenſation for taking her bonnet and pelife; then haſtily folding herſelf in the latter, and pulling the bonnet completely over her face, ſhe took the ſmall bundle of her cloaths that remained in her hand, and, with undeſcribable anxiety, made an effort to open the door of her chamber.

A weighty bar of iron was placed acroſs the door, in addition to a ſtrong double lock that faſtened it. Eſtella cautiouſly removed the bar; though heavy, it produced no ſound;

but, when with trembling fingers ſhe turned the key, which ſecured the lock, it ſeemed to ſnap with ſuch violence, that her heart ſunk within her, and ſhe remained a few minutes, motionleſs, with fear and terror.

Every thing, however, remained quiet in the apartment, and Eſtella, recovering her ſpirits, ſoftly cloſed the door, and deſcended the great ſtair-caſe. Though ſhe walked with the lightneſs of a ſylph, yet her ſoft ſteps re-echoed upon the large Gothic ſtairs upon which ſhe trod: her fears encreaſed every inſtant; every ſound ſeemed to indicate purſuit; and, when arrived at the entrance of the hall, ſhe was forced, for a few minutes, to graſp a pillar for ſupport!

Diſtant voices convinced her the inferior ſervants had riſen, and, upon gaining the outward hall, her joy was extreme, at perceiving the grand entrance door open!

She deſcended the ſtone ſteps that conducted into the park; and, with the utmoſt ſpeed, walked down the avenue of oaks which opened into the high road.

At the extremity of the walk was placed a lodge, kept by a woman, formerly a ſervant in the family, and, who now received a ſmall penſion from Iſenburgh for the trouble of attending the gate.

Eſtella's apprehenſions encreaſed as ſhe approached that ſpot, but truſting

to Ulrique's habit, and pulling her bonnet yet more over her face, ſhe walked on with tolerable compoſure.

Two little children were playing near the gate. Upon ſeeing her advance, they ran into the lodge to fetch the key from their mother, and ſpeedily returning, and unlocking the door, curteſied to Eſtella as ſhe paſſed; the eldeſt ſaying,

"Good morning, Miſtreſs Ulrique; I ſuppoſe you are going to the fair?"

"Yes, (anſwered Eſtella, ſcarce knowing what ſhe uttered; and, at the ſame time, throwing ſome ſmall

money to the little enquirer and his brother.")

The children gratefully returned their innocent thanks; and Eſtella, quickening her pace, hurried down the road, every moment dreading and expecting purſuit.

In leſs than a quarter of an hour, her apprehenſions increaſed, with hearing voices, and the ſound of wheels approaching! Her heart beat thick, and reſpiration nearly failed her, when the cauſe of her alarm appeared in ſight, and proved to be a ſmall cart, full of men, women and children, in their holiday cloaths, ſinging, laughing, and talking. Her fears gave way upon

perceiving them, and the driver of the cart addreſſed her as he approached, with,

"If you are going to the fair, young woman, I have juſt one ſeat to ſpare, and will carry you for a trifle?"

Eſtella joyfully accepted this propoſal; and though ſhe knew not to what fair they were going, or where ſhe ſhould be carried, willingly aſcended the vehicle.

The mirth and good humour which ſeemed to reign in the little circle, though ſhe did not partake of, yet diffuſed a tranſitory pleaſure over the mind of Eſtella, who gathered from

their converſation, that the fair to which they were deſtined, was held at Mindleheim, and about two leagues from thence.

Her companions, too much occupied with the idea of the pleaſure they ſhould enjoy, to obſerve the confuſion and embarraſſment of Eſtella, ſuffered her to remain ſilent and unnoticed; and after travelling about an hour and a half, which, to the agitated of Eſtella, ſeemed an age, the vehicle ſtopped at a ſmall inn in the ſuburbs of the town of Mindleheim.

Eſtella, not knowing what ſtep next to take, and whoſe mind was bewildered with anxiety, mechanically deſcended from the conveyance, and,

after ſatisfying the driver for his trouble, remained alone in the court-yard of the inn, her travelling companions having, with one accord, haſtily repaired to the ſpot on which was held the fair.

The rattling of a carriage aroused her in ſome meaſure from her reverie; ſhe retreated a few paces, and a coach, of general conveyance, drove up to the door, to take up paſſengers.

An elderly woman, of prepoſſeſſing appearance, deſcended from the ſteps of the inn door, and approached the coach, when, ſeeing Eſtella, and concluding from her dreſs, and the bundle ſhe held in her hand, that ſhe

was a fellow-traveller, addreſſed her with much civility. The coachman joining in the miſtake, intreated Eſtella to follow the lady; and Eſtella, in whoſe mind the idea of flying from Iſenburgh was alone predominant, waited not for a ſecond invitation: and, without knowing to what ſpot the coach was deſtined, or conſidering any thing but that ſhe might probably baffle the purſuit ſhe judged would be made after her, placed herſelf in the coach, which immediately ſet forwards, with a velocity nearly equal to her wiſhes; and ſhe was, in a few hours, many leagues diſtant from Mindleheim.

CHAP. XIV.

A ſolitary bleſſing few can find:
Our joys, with thoſe we love, are interwin'd:
And he, whoſe helpful tenderneſs removes
Th' obſtructing thorn which wounds the breaſt he loves,
Smooths not another's rugged path alone,
But ſcatters roſes to adorn his own.

MISS HANNAH MORE.

THE coach in which Eſtella travelled, happened to take up no other paſſenger; ſhe was therefore alone, with the woman who had, in ſome

CHAP. XV.

Then, while her lovely eyes with ſorrows flow,
She half reveals the ſtory of her woe:
The gentle dame her tale with pity hears,
Sighs back her grief, and anſwers tears with tears.

HOOLE'S TASSO.

THE ſecond evening after their departure from Mindleheim, Eſtella, with Mrs. Steinfort, arrived at *Pilſen*. Mrs. Steinfort deſired to be conveyed directly to the caſtle of Stralzi, adding,

that her preſence muſt be much required there, as the Marquis and Marchioneſs Roſenhaim were either arrived, or hourly expected, and conſequently the caſtle would be full of gueſts.

Eſtella's heart ſunk within her as they approached the ſplendid manſion of Stralzi; and looking at Mrs. Steinfort with eyes ſwimming in tears, ſaid:

"I ought to thank you for your many attentions, Madam, before we ſeparate. Alas! what will now become of me!"

Tears impeded further utterance. Mrs. Steinfort regarded her a few minutes in ſilence; then, taking her hand,

faid; " I cannot endure the thoughts of leaving fo young a woman unprotected. Will you place yourfelf under my care for this night? I can infure you, for that period, an afylum in the caftle: in the morning, I will mention your hiftory to the Baroneſs; and, if you have related the truth, I think, I may venture to promife you her protection."

The joy and gratitude of Eftella at the kind offer of Mrs. Steinfort, was perfectly without bounds; and fhe entered the caftle of Stralzi in a ftate of happineſs fhe had not experienced for many months.

The following morning, agreeably to her promife, Mrs. Steinfort acquaint-

ed the Baroneſs with the ſingular chance of her meeting with Eſtella; of the favourable opinion ſhe had inſpired her with; and of the liberty ſhe had taken, in bringing her for one night to the caſtle.

After hearing Mrs. Steinfort's recital, which the good woman rendered very minute, by enlarging upon the moſt trifling circumſtances, the Baroneſs declaring ſhe felt an uncommon prepoſſeſſion in her favour, deſired Mrs. Steinfort to conduct her to her apartment, a command Mrs. Steinfort obeyed with alacrity.

Eſtella, though delighted at the ſummons, yet felt much embarraſſed

at the idea of preſenting herſelf to the Baroneſs, but reſolved; if interrogated, to relate every occurrence of her life, the event of her marriage alone excepted; and that important circumſtance, ſhe held herſelf not at liberty to divulge, in conſequence of the ſacred promiſe ſhe had given to Sigiſmund to conceal it.

Notwithſtanding the encouraging aſſurances of Mrs. Steinfort, that Baroneſs Stralzi felt much diſpoſed in her favour, Eſtella's agitation was ſo exceſſive upon entering the apartment of the Baroneſs, that her trembling limbs almoſt refuſed to ſupport her. Mrs. Steinfort, as ſoon as ſhe had preſented her to the Lady, withdrew; and Eſ-

tella, ſinking at the feet of the Baroneſs, pathetically entreated her pity and protection.

The Baroneſs, though prepared by Mrs. Steinfort for the appearance of youth and extreme beauty, was yet dazzled by the bewitching lovelineſs of Eſtella, whom, raiſing from the ground, and placing on the ſofa by her ſide, ſhe encouraged by the moſt affable behaviour, and promiſed, if ſhe needed any office of friendſhip, to befriend her to the extent of her power.

The intereſting and innocent manner in which Eſtella uttered the gratitude of her heart, encreaſed the prepoſſeſſion and admiration of the Baronet.

Eſtella was endowed by nature with the moſt engaging addreſs, and captivating manner; and, as theſe qualities were the gifts of nature, unaſſiſted by art, ſo they ſeldom failed of intereſting thoſe ſhe addreſſed in her favour.

The Baroneſs, after ſome converſation, in which the ſuavity of her behaviour in ſome meaſure diminiſhed the diffidence of her juvenile companion, expreſſed a wiſh to know by what ſingular circumſtance ſo young a creature ſhould be thrown deſtitute and friendleſs on the world?

"For (added ſhe) Mrs. Steinfort informs me, you have told her, that you have not a ſingle friend in exiſtence?"

Eſtella, with tears, repeated the melancholy aſſurance; and, agreeable to the reſolution ſhe had formed, ſignified to the Baroneſs, that, if it would not be intruding too much upon her time, ſhe would relate the incidents of her life.

The Baroneſs teſtified an eager deſire to hear her narrative; and, after a ſhort time, Eſtella faithfully related every circumſtance of her early life; the ſingular manner in which Madame Veldentz kept her ſecluded in the foreſt near Colditz, and of the unaccountable departure of her governeſs; not concealing the letter which informed her, that the Abbeſs of St. Clare was prepared to receive her: her flight from their cottage to eſcape

the Abbeſs, with the chimerical hope of overtaking Madame Veldentz."

When Eſtella approached that part of her hiſtory that related to her firſt ſeeing Sigiſmund, grief at his remembrance, and confuſion at the idea that ſhe muſt ſuppreſs the circumſtances of her life that related to him, almoſt overpowered her, and articulation was, for a few moments, ſuſpended.

The Baroneſs, who ſolely imputed her diſorder to confuſion at the recollection of her diſobedience to the injunctions of her governeſs, endeavoured to comfort her; and Eſtella, with ſome difficulty, proceeded to relate her meeting with Count Iſenburgh in the foreſt; of his conveying her to his caſtle near

Colditz, and her illneſs and confinement there; of her application to the Abbeſs of St. Clare, and diſtreſs at being refuſed admittance to the convent: and her then gaining an aſylum in that of St. Agnes.

She then proceeded to relate the artifice by which Iſenburgh had enſnared her from the convent; and of his ſubſequent conduct whilſt in his power, at his caſtle, near Mindleheim; and concluded, with an exact detail of her fortunate eſcape, and ſtill more fortunate meeting with Mrs. Steinfort, which had been the means of introducing her to the Baroneſs Stralzi

When Eſtella had concluded her ſtory, the Baroneſs, affected by her

ſufferings, and ſoftened by her apparent candour, thanked her for the confidence ſhe had repoſed, and promiſed to render her every ſervice in her power; at the ſame time ſhe could not forbear from pointing out to Eſtella, that her diſtreſſes had ariſen from her own imprudence; and that, from diſobedience to the injunctions of Madame Veldentz, her ſubſequent misfortunes ſolely originated!

"To be deprived in ſo ſudden and extraordinary a manner of your protectreſs, (added the Baroneſs,) was a heavy affliction, and required the exertion of all your fortitude; but, from your knowledge of the character of your friend, you ought to have been convinced that her reaſons for quitting

you were not to be controverted; and that, even could you have overtaken her in her flight, you would have only added to her diſtreſs: and, after all, the ſeparation *muſt* have taken place.

"If Madame Veldentz acted from good principles, ſhe would have been *firm*; if, from bad ones, you would, depend upon it, have found her *implacable!* I do not mean to diſtreſs you; but are you aware of all the conſequences attendant upon the rejection of the Abbeſs of St. Clare to receive you in the convent?"

"My conduct admits of no extenuation." (Returned Eſtella, weeping.)

" Yes; your youth and inexperience are, in ſome meaſure, palliatives; and you have even ſuffered beyond your indiſcretion, (replied the Baroneſs;) but, it appears from your ſtory, that the idea has never occurred to you, that it is alone in the convent of St. Clare, that you can ever hope to hear intelligence of Madame Veldentz; for, as ſhe ſuppoſes you in that retirement, if, at any future period ſhe is induced to ſeek you, will not that naturally be the place of her enquiry?"

" The reflection has too often wounded me, Madam, (anſwered Eſtella;) though I muſt own I am hopeleſs, as to her ever attempting to ſeek

me! But what can I do? The Abbeſs, prejudiced againſt me, has refuſed me admittance; and what ſhall I gain by freſh application, but a contumelious refuſal! Nevertheleſs, if it is your Ladyſhip's advice, I will make the attempt."

"I would adviſe, that, at any rate you make enquiries reſpecting your friend, (replied the Baroneſs,) who, it is *poſſible*, though not very *probable*, may have written to you at the convent."

"I dare not hope for ſuch good fortune! (exclaimed Eſtella;) yet, depend upon it, my Lady, I will follow your advice."

"Then write to the Abbefs, in the courfe of a few days, (rejoined the Baronefs;) inform her, that you are, at prefent, under my protection; and, fo far from defiring your admittance into the convent, I do not intend to part with you; but requeft to hear any intelligence fhe may have to communicate refpecting Madame Veldentz. I will alfo write to her, and inclofe your letter in my packet."

Eftella expreffed her gratitude and thanks for the kindnefs of the Baronefs, in the moft affecting manner; and felt fo powerfully, the force of her goodnefs, that the moft painful regret overwhelmed her at having been forced

to act with duplicity, towards, ſo apparently, an amiable woman; and, while ſeemingly diſcloſing the whole of her hiſtory, concealing ſuch a principal event as her marriage!

She felt moſt ſeverely, that *one* deviation from truth, introduces a repetition of falſehoods; and deeply regretted, that, hurried on by paſſion, ſhe had ever yielded conſent to a clandeſtine union, which had neceſſitated her to promiſe ſuch inviolable ſecreſy; the memory of Sigiſmund was dearer to her than ever; and ſhe reproached herſelf with having been the cauſe of ſuch an affectionate ſon's diſobedience to his parents; and painted, in her imagination, the diſtreſs

and remorſe he muſt have endured upon his death bed, whilſt receiving the tendereſt parental attentions, at the reflection, that he had committed an action he dared not to avow!

As theſe afflicting images paſſed over the mind of Eſtella, her countenance imbibed the melancholy caſt of her ideas, and appeared ſo affectingly ſorrowful, that the Baroneſs, who was attentively obſerving her, felt almoſt overpowered with pity and commiſeration; and, taking her hand as ſhe ſat by her ſide, aſſured her, in the kindeſt manner, of her future friendſhip; and Eſtella, ſmiling through her tears, endeavoured to throw aſide the gloomy, and entertain more cheerful ideas.

The entrance of Baron Stralzi interrupted their converfation; and, after having been introduced to him by the Baroneſs, as a young perſon of whom ſhe had taken charge, Eſtella withdrew to her own apartment.

CHAP. XVI.

Then pilgrim turn, thy cares forego,
All earth born cares are wrong:
Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

GOLDSMITH.

BARONESS Stralzi was naturally amiable and good-tempered; but romantic and credulous to an extreme. Married at a very early period to a

man conſiderably older than herſelf, who indulged her in every inclination and caprice, ſhe gave way, without ſcruple, to the predominant turn of her mind; and to be *beautiful*, *intereſting*, and *unfortunate*, was a ſure criterion to obtain her aid, ſympathy and friendſhip.

Notwithſtanding the innumerable deceptions that were practiſed upon her, and the variety of diſappointments ſhe experienced, Baroneſs Stralzi perſiſted in cheriſhing the illuſion, and allowing herſelf to be ſolely governed by the impulſe of the moment, a failing that was particularly favourable to Eſtella, whoſe beautiful

figure, and romantic hiſtory, at once excited a conſiderable intereſt in her boſom.

The Baron, who ſaw with pain the ſerious vexations that the ſudden and violent friendſhips of his lady frequently produced, liſtened but coldly to the encomiums beſtowed by her on Eſtella, after ſhe had withdrawn; and could ſcarce forbear from hinting his doubts, as to the truth of her ſtory, which appeared to him ſtrange and improbable.

Complaiſance, however, to the Baroneſs, conſtrained him to ſilence upon that ſubject; and he contented

himſelf with obſerving, that he hoped her new friend would not diſappoint her expectations.

The Baron, though thus miſtruſtful of the innocent Eſtella, wanted neither goodneſs of heart, nor liberality of ſentiment; he was, on the contrary, one of the worthieſt and beſt of men; and, to his urbanity and philanthropy, the Baroneſs was greatly indebted for the high character given of her by Mrs. Steinfort; for, as ſhe never *oppoſed* any ſcheme of benevolence he might adopt, he, in return, generally beſtowed upon her the merit of the action.

Very contrary to the wiſhes of Eſtella, Baroneſs Stralzi, to evince her regard, inſiſted upon her joining the family at dinner.

Upon entering the dining hall, ſhe found, beſides the Baron, (to whom ſhe had been preſented in the morning,) his youngeſt ſon, Lord Palamede, and the Marquis and Marchioneſs Roſenhaim.

Lord Palamede, in whoſe praiſe Mrs. Steinfort had been ſo laviſh, fully equalled the deſcription given him as to external appearance, and ſeemed ſenſible and agreeable in his manners.

The Marquis Roſenhaim had an auſterity in his countenance, and hauteur in his converſation, that inſpired Eſtella with a degree of awe that was even painful; but, whatever diſagreeable ſenſations ſhe might feel when addreſſed by him, the mild affability of the Marchioneſs more than recompenſed.

This charming woman appeared to Eſtella, not to be more than four or five and thirty years old; but, from ſome converſation that took place betwixt her and the Baroneſs, ſhe afterwards concluded to be ſome years older.

She was tall, graceful, and beau-

tifully formed; and ſo captivating in her manner, that Eſtella, from the moment ſhe beheld her, felt eager to obtain her notice and regard.

In conſidering her countenance, it ſtruck Eſtella as bearing a ſtrong affinity to ſome one ſhe had ſeen before; but to whom ſhe could not recollect.

The Marchioneſs, though, in general, unlike the Baroneſs, in reſpect to ſudden attachments, yet felt inconceivably charmed with Eſtella; and, though ſhe had, upon firſt hearing the hiſtory, rather blamed the Baroneſs's credulity, in taking the young creature under her protection *before*

ſhe had written to the Abbeſs of the convent of St. Clare, and made enquiries concerning her, after ſeeing and converſing with her, ſhe found it impoſſible to condemn the predilection of the Baroneſs.

Notwithſtanding the kind attentions of the Marchioneſs and Baroneſs, the politeneſs of Palamede, and the hoſpitality of the Baron, Eſtella felt conſtrained in a ſociety ſo new to her, and eagerly embraced a hint given by the Baroneſs, that probably ſhe had not recovered the fatigue of her journey, to retire to her own apartment.

She had no ſooner retired, than

ſhe became the general topic of converſation.

The Baroneſs was warm, even to enthuſiaſm in her praiſe! The Marchioneſs admired her artleſs manners, and the extreme modeſty ſhe poſſeſſed: the Baron exclaimed, "ſhe was the prettieſt girl he had ever ſeen;" and the Marquis ſaid, "ſhe would be a compleat beauty, had her figure but more dignity."

But the perſon who was moſt ſilent on the ſubject, felt, perhaps, a warmer intereſt, and more lively curioſity, concern-Eſtella, than any one in company.

Palamede had not ſpoken a ſylla-

ble from the time ſhe had quitted the room, yet his thoughts were ſo fixed upon her, that he had ſcarce heard a ſentence of the converſation that had paſſed.

Eſtella had not been many minutes in her chamber, when ſome gentle taps at the door preluded the appearance of Mrs. Steinfort.

"Well, my dear young Lady, (cried ſhe upon entering the apartment,) I may now congratulate you upon having ſecured a ſafe and comfortable aſylum! I aſſure you, I am rejoiced at your good fortune. And how do you like my Lady and the

Baron? Are they not a worthy couple?"

Eſtella uttered every grateful expreſſion her heart could dictate, to Mrs. Steinfort, for her introduction; and beſtowed the warmeſt encomiums upon the Baron and Baroneſs, particularly upon the latter; and then enquired, if the Marquis and Marchioneſs Roſenhaim were related to the family?

"Yes, (replied Mrs. Steinfort;) the Marchioneſs is my Lady's own ſiſter. Is ſhe not a charming woman, Miſs Eſtella? To look at her, who would ſuppoſe ſhe had grown up chil-

dren! Yet ſuch is the fact. Her daughter was married a few months ago to Count Altenburgh; and her ſon is at preſent travelling, and *our* Lord Friburgh is his companion. We expect them back in about two months time; and, till then, the Marquis and Marchioneſs will remain here."

"The Marchioneſs is, indeed, a lovely woman, (returned Eſtella,) 'tis impoſſible to behold her without feeling both love and admiration!"

"And the Counteſs, her daughter, is juſt ſuch another ſweet creature! (rejoined Mrs. Steinfort.) Oh, 'tis a charming family, Miſs Eſtella,

except the Marquis—but mum, for that! I do not love to rail, or elſe I could tell you a few anecdotes concerning him that would not encreaſe your good opinion!"

"Why, it is an unpleaſant taſk to dwell upon the failings of mankind!" (Anſwered Eſtella.)

"It is indeed, Miſs! (returned Mrs. Steinfort.) And therefore I do not love to ſpeak concerning the Marquis."

Then enquiring of Eſtella, if ſhe had every thing ſhe deſired; or, if he ſhould ſend a female ſervant to attend her; and being aſſured in

reply, that ſhe wanted no aſſiſtance, Mrs. Steinfort retired with many expreſſions of kindneſs and good will.

Eſtella, when left alone, found it impoſſible to cloſe her eyes. The ſtrange manner in which ſhe had eſcaped the power of Iſenburgh, and the flattering hope that ſhe had ſecured powerful friends and protectors, overpowered her mind with joy.

Then the viciſſitudes ſhe had experienced during the laſt ſix months of her life crowded upon her imagination; and laſtly, the tender recollection of her beloved Sigiſmund, and the inſupportable idea, that he died in the conviction of her falſe-

hood, tortured her with unſpeakable anguiſh; and it was not till the approach of day-light that ſleep ſettled upon her eye-lids, and lulled her to a temporary repoſe.

LANE, MINERVA PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET